



Minutes of the Thirty eighth Annual Town Meeting held in the Drawing Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Thursday 9 May 2024 at 6.15pm, convened under the provision of the section 99 and schedule 12 of the Local Government Act, 1972

Present: Councillor Nicholson (Town Mayor) (Chairman)

Councillors Adams, Barney, Brown, Carter, Ellis, Oliver, Rafferty, Sanders and Walters

In attendance: Debbie Faulkner, Locum Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk; 2 members of the public

252 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dodwell, Hollis and Wardrop.

**253 MINUTES
RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Thirty seventh Annual Town Meeting held on 11 May 2023 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

254 REPORT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Mayor provided a written report which was circulated to attendees.

Context

Cowes Social Significance Today

Cowes remains, primarily, a maritime town. Its main events, industry and leisure activities and many of its principal organisations are focused on the sea. The main, international, event, Cowes Week, has suffered decline over recent years, but other events have risen, broadening the regatta spirit across the sailing season. Other events, too, have risen in the town, giving it a new cultural aspect, events such as the Literary Festival, the Fringe, Great Wight Bite and other events. Unlike many other towns, Cowes High Street is thriving, with many small independent and unique shops. With its restaurants, pubs, bars and clubs, Cowes has become The place to go for a night out!

Industry

Cowes and the Cowes Peninsula is an area of significant innovation contributing to world-class industry, with Companies, ideas and skills that are of international repute and demand. Our historic record in this field continues into the modern age with Companies and organisations laying down a record that can be proudly regarded by future generations. It is important for people, and Authorities, to not get stuck, in focus, just on the past, and to recognise that today's events, industry, innovations, people and buildings will form tomorrow's heritage and not throw the baby out with the bath water! It is easy to recognise greatness after the event, when others have recognised and declared it so. It takes a particular astuteness to recognise greatness in the making, and I am convinced that we have a lot of it in progress, under our noses, some of it, sadly, being stifled if we stand by and let it happen.

Royal Patronage

Patronage of the Royals helped put Cowes on the map as a desirable social venue. As unwavering representatives of a Country, its standards and image, especially in these fast-moving and turbulent

political times, the continued patronage of Royal representatives is an important endorsement and supports continuity of tradition and values in a modern context.

What We Have Done and are Doing

Medina Road Toilets

Cowes Town Council, working with our Architectural adviser and selected Contractor has carried out a comprehensive refurbishment of the Medina Road toilets. The building is actually owned by Southern Water and its primary function is in that regard, and permission for the works had to be sought from Southern Water. The old toilets were very tired and the redesign was challenging given the tight space and constraints that we had to work with, but we are delighted with the achievement which has delivered public toilets of a very high standard, free to use at a strategic location.

New Changing Places Facility

With the support of a national grant and break-neck timetable, Cowes Town Council has managed to pull out the stops to deliver a much needed Changing Places facility right in the heart of the town in the easy to access area of The Cut. The Changing Places facility does what it says on the label: it provides a facility for people in need of a safe location to wash and change, with a toilet, shower, hoist and full disabled facilities. Cowes Town Council are very proud of the way that it has been able to demonstrate its care and consideration for the most needy of its visitors and residents in providing such a facility.

The Cut

We are nearing delivery of the long-term plan to pedestrianise The Cut, a project that was and remains a priority for towns-people. The project has been frustrated in the final steps of its delivery, not just through seeking a comprehensive design that pleased everybody whilst delivering the objective, but, then, by Covid, increasing costs, other urgent priorities on the Highway and compliance with changing standards. However, after all this work, we are now in the final stages of planning and programming for delivery later this year.

CCTV at Northwood Recreation Ground

Following numerous incidents of mindless vandalism and the risks of wider issues concerning inconsiderate and anti-social behaviour by a minority of young people, Cowes Town Council Projects team considered an essential and prudent measure to install CCTV at Northwood Recreation Ground. It is unfortunate that such a lovely place and such good facilities can be abused by so few people albeit on an infrequent basis. Nevertheless, the Town Council is determined to preserve the safety and enjoyment of facilities such as Northwood Recreation Ground for the many of its residents and visitors' appreciation and enjoyment.

Celebrating Landmark History

On 22 November 1633, two sailing ships, The Ark and The Dove set sail from Cowes. Those on board became the founding fathers of Maryland, USA. The significance of this event is much celebrated in Maryland and we often receive visits from our American Cousins to see the port of origin. The story is an important and interesting piece of our heritage and the Town Council has marked it by designing and gaining permission to install a pictorial information board re-counting details of event to be sited on The Parade.

The Wishing Well

The Wishing Well, in Shooters Hill has proved a bit of an anomaly then the glass top to the Well became broken and the Well had to be made secure for safety reasons. It turned out that no-one knows who actually owned the Well, which meant that a lengthy procedure had to be undertaken by the Town Council to be able to legally take responsibility for the Well so that it could carry out repairs to it. But, it was not as simple as that, because the Well is on the Public Highway, different rules apply as to who can carry out works on it, as they have to be formally accredited to carry out works in a public domain such as Highways. At the time of this report, we are waiting for final approval of the contractor's work plans before the works to make the Well safe again can be carried out.

The Impacts of Anti-Social Behaviour

It seems to be a mark of modern times that a certain element of disenfranchised youth disrespect public and private property, places and members of the public, causing damage, anxiety and wider harm and at great cost to the private and public purse. Cowes Town Council have been as pro-active as possible, particularly in its insistence on police action, a call that has been listened to and acted upon by our police service. The Town Council are now working with the Police and specialist IW Council officers to address what is identified as underlying causes, circumstances that can give rise to inconsiderate and unruly behaviour amongst young people, and through the Cowes & Northwood Place Plan, in collaboration with other local stakeholders, we are providing facilities to better occupy and engage youth associated with this phenomenon, in the hope that we can divert their energies to more constructive ends and outcomes.

Our Plans

Value Council

It is important to check that, as a Town Council, we are providing value for money to the people we serve and who fund us through the precept. A first step towards this is to identify what we have to do, what we can do and what people would like of us, then to check that we are adequately resourced and structured to operate in as efficient manner as we can. In industry this is a routine exercise; local government is not industry, but the same principals can be applied; it depends on the leadership, the skills and experience of its officers and Members, bearing in mind that Councillors are not employees, but volunteers, giving their time, effort and knowledge free of charge. In this year we have set up a management structure and review system, are identifying where resources might be improved and carrying out a task audit.

Leadership at The Heart of the Community

Through the Cowes & Northwood Place Plan, Cowes Town Council are being seen to be taking a lead in supporting collaborative working with other local stakeholders and interested parties. Having carried out the background work in, first holding meetings with wider stakeholders to discuss direction and objectives in relation to the Place Plan, some Work Group themes became apparent and cross-community Work Groups set up to drive those themes in the context of the Place Plan, engaging councillors from Cowes and Northwood who have a specific interest or expertise in that area. Many of the Projects sit across many themes, so Groups to drive those projects bring expertise from their specialist themes. Community involvement and, thereby, buy-in is important because it enables consensus in the control or influence of our future at local level. Via the Place Plan, Cowes Town Council has a leading role in Community development.

Developing a Strategy

Developing a strategy means having a plan with purpose and objectives. Continuity is difficult in a political world, but not impossible. By building a management structure, procedures, rules objectives that are collaborative and inclusive and draws on available expertise from within, wherever and whenever it is available helps. Doing the same with the Place Plan, the overarching Plan for the area, that belongs to the stakeholders and people of that area and is supported as being so by local Councils does the same, provided, in the process, it is secured in such a way that it does not rest or rely solely on personalities. These are the structures that we are building.

Questions were invited but none were asked.

255 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 were circulated at the meeting. Ms Debbie Faulkner (Locum Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer) was available for any questions. Debbie provided clarification on the breakdown of legal costs as documented, and on the accounting of monies received following the discontinuance of Cowes Business Association. The VAT refund for the financial year 2023/24 has been received. It was:

RESOLVED

That the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 be received and noted.

256 ANNUAL SUMMARY – SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting. No members of the Safer Neighbourhood Team were in attendance.

257 ANNUAL SUMMARY – IW COUNCILLORS

Written reports were received from Councillors Fuller, Nicholson, Peacey Wilcox and Quigley.

Councillor Paul Fuller (Cowes West and Gurnard)

The nine Issues which I promised to address prior to my re-election in 2021.

- **You said: Significantly reducing the annual housing figure from 1045.**
- **I did:** Within the Draft Island Planning Strategy (DIPS), I support significantly reducing the annual housing figure to 453. This figure is 1/3 lower than Government imposed figure for the Island of 730.
- **You said: Prioritising Local Housing for Local People**
- **I did:** Within the DIPS policies are prioritised to deliver affordable housing for local residents (Policy H5). This is a priority for the Alliance Administration, which I am part of. The DIPs will be considered by IW Councillors on 1st May.
- **You said: Support Working Families.**
- **I did:** Supporting low paid working families through increasing Council Tax benefits from 65% to 75%. This was revisited by Full Council, following some Councillors wanting to fund this by scrapping the hardship fund.
- **You said: Support road safety outside schools.**
- **I did:** New Traffic Regulation Orders were implemented as a result by the IW Council outside local schools.
- **You said: Scrap proposals to charge for car parking on Cowes/ Gurnard seafront.**
- **I did:** No ifs, no buts, no woolly compromises. These were scrapped within days by the Alliance Administration.
- **You said: Improve access to Town Centres and review car parking.**
- **I did:** Ongoing supported action of Cowes Place Plan for Town Centre regeneration. I supported the campaign to freeze car parking for 2024/5 and campaigns with Parish Council pilots offering Free Parking across the Island.
- **You said: Supporting an IW Council that listens, is inclusive and acts on feedback.**
- **I did:** Supported new Parish Council involvement at Scrutiny and within Planning. I support greater involvement for all IW Councillors within a Committee system, led and enacted feedback on a number of public facing consultations.
- **You said: Review Council Tax Expenditure**
- **I did:** Scrutinise, challenge and consult on Council Tax. On this, I have shared and responded to resident's concerns.
- **You said: Ensure Government supports the extra costs needed to support the Isle of Wight.**
- **I did:** The Council continues to campaign for its promised Island Deal. Although the Alliance achieved small wins, this has not gone far enough or addresses the cost (+£10m per year) to Island residents for our severance by sea.

Representing our Community in County Hall, rather than County Hall in our Community:

- This is my 15th Annual Report as Councillor for Cowes West and Gurnard.
- I have been ward Councillor for Cowes West and Gurnard since 2009, and as a Isle of Wight Councillor this is my sixth term of office, since being first elected as an Isle of Wight Councillor for Ryde in 1995.

- As an Independent, I continue putting the needs of our Cowes and Gurnard community first.
- As an Independent, having no activists, no sponsors, no political party line, or leader shadowing me, my loyalty to represent every resident in Gurnard and Cowes is absolute.
- Within my role, I'm committed to being a transparent, hardworking, effective and enthusiastic councillor.
- If you feel that I, or the Councils where I represent your views get things wrong, please tell me. Unless I am made aware, I'm not in a position to listen, ask questions, put things right and fight on your behalf! If I cannot achieve the outcomes you desire, I will explain why.
- Campaigning to protect vital services, I am committed to ensure our Councils say yes, rather than no. It remains in the forefront of my mind that I am only here because you re-elect me. As Councillor my priority is simply to put our community first.
- I do this because I thoroughly love it! Because I enjoy my 'work', I hope that it shows and I achieve the very best outcomes possible for residents.

Monthly Reports

- Each month I write a report. These provide regular updates of my work, and can be found at Cowes Library.
- Reports are edited for the Gurnard News, the Cowes Magazine and The Beacon. My Full Monthly Reports can be found on my website at: <https://paulfullercc.blogspot.com>. Each month provides details of between 30-50 items which I am dealing with, alongside matters which are of importance.

Organisations and Outside Bodies that I am a member and support:

- **Cowes Town Council.** Town Councillor for Cowes North 2001-2005; from 2009- ; Mayor 2017-2019;
- **Gurnard Parish Council.** Councillor from 2005; Chairman from 2022;
- **Northwood Parish Councillor.** Founding member of Northwood Parish Council. Councillor since 2007;
- **Local Access Forum.** Chairman (2020-). This statutory body oversees Rights of Ways matters. The Forum works closely with landowners and user groups to improve access to the right of way network. Since 2019, I have been actively working on the Isle of Wight section of the English Coastal Path.
- **Footprint Trust.** The Trust supports lifting residents (often vulnerable) out of fuel poverty
- **Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (SIFCA).** Vice-Chairman. Funded by DEFRA and local authorities, SIFCA regulates marine conservation and fisheries for Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.
- **Solent Forum.** This organisation oversees Economic and Environmental challenges within the Solent.
- **Isle of Wight Natural Landscape.** This group oversees challenges faced to the Isle of Wight's Countryside.
- **IW Council Local Pensions Board.** This body is an external body that monitors the £750m IWC pension fund.

I am a **Justice of the Peace** serving the Isle of Wight Adult and Youth courts since 2001.

Within the **Isle of Wight Council**, I am cabinet member for Planning, Coastal Protection and Flooding. As a Councillor with cabinet responsibilities I have overview on all aspects of the Council's activities.

One year in numbers. As your Councillor:

- I am contactable 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- I work between 40 and 65 hours each week.
- I attended 306 meetings associated with my role.
- In addition, I've attended 41 informal/ associated meetings, events, briefings, exhibitions & site visits.

- I attended 42 Isle of Wight Council Meetings.
- I've received 4188 emails, 993 telephone calls, 662 texts and 5 letters. I aim to respond within 3 days and attempt to prioritise calls from Cowes West and Gurnard residents within 12 hours of receipt.
- I've resolved/ relayed 1905 enquiries. 34% of these relate to Gurnard residents; 26% to Cowes West residents; 15% from other Cowes/ Northwood residents and 15% to residents living elsewhere.
- In the last year I've arranged 100 surgeries. Supporting 390 enquiries to completion for residents.

This year I received a Councillors Allowance of: **£18,128.70**

IW Councillors Report.

As Councillor for Cowes West and Gurnard, I remain on call at all times, much of the work I undertake is fed back within monthly reports. In addition, I have increased my surgeries due to more residents seeking my support from across the Island. Although I cannot support everybody, I will signpost residents to those who can.

With finance becoming tighter for residents, it becomes more and more challenging to provide the help, assistance and support that residents need and deserve. Having dealt with hundreds of issues over the last 12 months, it is difficult to quantify those issues that are the most relevant- as different people have different priorities.

As Isle of Wight Councillor, Town and Parish Councillors of Cowes, Gurnard and Northwood act as my eyes and ears, and I really appreciate the support that they provide for our communities.

One of the biggest concerns raised continues to be that of anti-social parking. On this count, I have addressed parking concerns outside local schools, the abuse of disabled bays, speeding traffic, updating traffic orders and concerns over road works.

Road resurfacing for many streets remain a priority particularly for Worsley Road in Gurnard and Crossfield Avenue in Cowes. This followed financial support for resurfacing being withdrawn by the IW Council in 2018.

Local planning complaints continue to keep me busy, whether it is regarding planning enforcement or new applications which if not resolved from the get-go can adversely impact upon residents lives. Also of concern is the lack of Isle of Wight affordable social housing, as well as what is allowed under permitted development rights. What I continue to ask is that those wishing to make changes to their property to please first speak to your neighbours first!

Other priorities that I support residents with are neighbourhood disputes. A number of residents have approached me over the last year about concerns which on occasions can be very difficult to address at a later stage. On this, no matter how difficult things may get I always will try to do my very best to resolve issues.

Councillor John Nicholson (Cowes South and Northwood)

Achievements and Advances Roundup

- Being Cowes Town Council Mayor, leading review, change and reform.
- Leading in the development of Cowes & Northwood Place Plan development and implementation, facilitating meetings and setting up of Working Groups to address particular objective themes and projects.
- Vice Chairmanship of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Adult Social Care, assisting and supporting, challenging health partners and being critical where needed.
- Supporting, representing and advising residents in various local and personal issues and concerns, from planning matters to parking issues and social concerns.
- Negotiating and being actively engaged with Island Roads with regards to road works quality and impact mitigation. Campaigning against unnecessary disruption and inconvenience caused by poor consideration in Utility roadworks, including calling out defective works.

- Acting as representative on Island Roads Health and Safety Forum.
- Holding local police services to account for response rates to reported incidents and concerns.
- Holding local health services to account in matters concerning service levels.
- Helping to promote awareness of local heritage and culture.
- Being outspoken, when needed, to represent and voice concerns that have caused local concern.
- Being an actively involved member of Northwood Parish Council and Cowes Town Council

Councillor Lora Peacey Wilcox (Cowes Medina)

My annual report is that each month I produce a report of issues affecting my local residents. I have produced these for over 23 years. They can be found on the link at:

www.islandmagazines.co.uk

And before that, all the previous ones in the Beacon articles that I have done for over 25 years. I regularly attend Cowes Town Council and report monthly and answer questions or queries there. I am grateful to Town Councillors for volunteering their time, for free, to speak/act on behalf of residents.

Also to the Town Clerks, who I know work above and beyond the hours and work they should, thanks.

Councillor Richard Quigley (Cowes North)

Sewage leak, Park Road – thanks to resident T for contacting me to inform of the sewage flowing from a manhole. He had been on hold to Southern Water for 20 mins with no answer. Luckily I got through on the sewage line. However, Southern Water said they had 24 hours to respond. Luckily they were there within an hour. I have asked the chief customer officer to list the sewage number on the Southern Water website as it isn't clear.

Island Plan – with cross party agreement, the Island Plan now moves on to the next stage. There are 2,400 households on the housing list, with 200 families in emergency accommodation. We need to build homes for Island residents.

Cold calling – thanks to Phill for contacting me about Anglian home improvements. I have contacted them and asked that cold calling stops in Cowes.

Questions were invited but none were asked.

258 QUESTIONS FROM THE MEETING

No questions were raised.

The proceedings terminated at 6.24pm.

CHAIRMAN