



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

WINTER GARDENS

7PM

8 NOVEMBER 2010

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors: Debby Robinson (Mayor), Chris Bonney, David George, Steve Stubbings, Gillian Jenner, Harry Rees, Jason Mack, James Toogood

ITEM SUBJECT

PUBLIC FORUM

The Mayor opened the Public Forum with 19 members of the public present

- a) A member of the public commented on the widespread speculation about the future of the Winter Gardens and asked if there were plans to hold a special open meeting. The Mayor responded that item 7 would address this question.
- b) The question of how the Entertainments Manager role was being replaced was raised and the Mayor responded that a Programme Group of Staff and three Town Councillors was meeting regularly to progress the events and entertainments programme.
- c) Arrangements for the repair of damaged benches were questioned and the Town Clerk said that he had been referred requests for repairs to the Isle of Wight Council's staff to be carried out on a paid-for basis.
- d) A member of the public observed about the Old Station Road Traffic Order that if the Fire Station were not being relocated the proposed restrictions would not be necessary.
- e) Another member of the public commented on the continuing absence of a Town Council web site and the consequent inaccessibility of the Agenda. Councillor Chris Bonney said Agenda item 9 would address the matter
- f) The importance of maintaining a genuine multi-agency approach to the future of the Winter Gardens was stressed.
- g) The meeting began at 7.15pm.

197/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chris Welsford.

198/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jim Toogood declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11.

Councillor Harry Rees declared an interest as the Chair of the Ventnor Social Club

Councillor Debby Robinson declared an interest in Agenda item 10.

199/10 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Town Council meeting of 11 October 2010 were considered. Councillor Gillian Jenner asked that the number of feedback forms received be corrected from 82 to 81 and Councillor Bonney said that it needed to be clearer that it was the absence of dimensions in the planning application discussed in Minute 193/10 b.

It was unanimously resolved by those present at the meeting:

that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 11 October, with these adjustments, be agreed as an accurate record of the business of that meeting and be signed accordingly by the Mayor.

200/10 VENTNOR BOTANIC GARDENS

- a) Philip Le May addressed the meeting providing an update on developments and notice of a

further Friends meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Monday 15 November that Cabinet Member Councillor George Brown is expected to attend.

- b) He said that the Isle of Wight Council's intentions are still not known but further cuts of up to 30% in funding are expected and that will have obvious consequences for staffing.
- c) He talked of the proposal to set up a Development Trust, stressing that this is still in its early stages. He said that they are looking to engage professional assistance as some significant changes are essential to secure the future of the Gardens in some form with for the first time a profit making potential.
- d) He concluded by saying that he hoped more information would be available at the meeting to be held at the Winter Gardens this coming Monday.
- e) Councillor Gill Jenner asked about the consequences of the staffing reductions and the Mayor asked about the input from the Royal Hotel.

It was unanimously resolved:

that the Town Council supports the retention of the Botanic Gardens as a hugely important attraction to the Town.

201/10 FINANCE

- a) The Finance report for this meeting had been previously circulated to Members and included information on Bank Balances at 30 October 2010 and a list of payments made during October 2010.
 - b) An accompanying paper set out the Precept related expenditure in the first six months of the current financial year.
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202/10 WINTER GARDENS

- a) The Mayor introduced the item with a statement to clarify the present situation in relationships with the Isle of Wight Council. She covered the Isle of Wight Council's attempt to change the long-standing Management Agreement and the Town Council's refusal to do so.
 - b) She further referred to the overdue payment of the Management Fee and said that requests for meetings to discuss these and related issues and had yet to be responded to.
 - c) She stressed that no secret negotiations had taken place and that the only reason for discussions being in private was to protect matters that were commercially sensitive.
 - d) Councillor Gilly Jenner then reported in some detail on the Feedback responses to the initial stage of the consultation with residents on the future of the Winter Gardens. She summarised responses on aspects such as the wide range of activities people wanted to see in the facility. Other responses addressed the issue of which activities would attract people into the Theatre.
 - e) Responses had also been sought about the future role of the Winter Gardens in the life of the Town and Councillor Jenner quoted extracts from them to give a flavour of the sample stressing that the opposition to selling the space to a developer and the importance of retaining it as a community resource.
 - f) She noted that some respondents recognised the need for more radical actions and concluded by stressing how seriously the Town Council was taking the consultation process not least because the critical decisions about the building's future had yet to be made.
 - g) She thanked those members of the public who had given time and serious thought to the future of the Winter Gardens.
 - h) The detailed analysis of the feedback responses is attached with these minutes.
 - i) Councillor David George commented on the quality of the responses and stressed that this was the beginning of the process not its conclusion. He noted the value of the work presented by the Film Society and drew attention to developments in the coming programme around theatre and exhibitions. He invited people to visit the new Balmoral
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Gallery that has launched a series of exhibitions.

203/10 PARKS LICENCE EXTENSION

- a) Councillor Jim Toogood said that he had spoken with both the Licensing and Environment Services and had been advised that the distance between the Bandstand and the proposed site for outdoor performances was too great to qualify as an extension of the existing Bandstand licence.
- b) He asked that the Town Council agree to apply for a new licence for the proposed site.

It was unanimously resolved:

that an application be made for an additional licence.

204/10 COMMUNICATIONS

- a) Councillor Chris Bonney introduced the item to deal with both the Web Site and the Process Group.
- b) He summarised the limited progress since signing the contract and stated that the product developed to date was unacceptable. He proceeded to describe what he felt to be the failures of the both the provider and the draft site they had offered.

It was resolved:

A new provider be sought for the production of the Town Council web site.

Councillor David George voted against this resolution.

- c) Councillor Chris Bonney reported on the work of the Process Group during its three meetings to date on the twenty or so policy documents the Town Council should have in place.
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205/10 FOOTPATHS

- a) In the absence of Councillor Chris Welsford, Councillor Chris Bonney reported that this item would need to be deferred to the next meeting.
 - b) Councillor David George asked that members of the public with a concern about footpaths register them with the Town Clerk and apologised for the continuing delay in addressing the issue.
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206/10 OUTDOOR FITNESS AREA

- a) Councillor Gillian Jenner introduced this item, reporting on the discussions that had taken place to date in progressing this project.
- b) Although it had been established that the Isle of Wight Council would lease the land at a peppercorn rent, they would need to be assured that the operator had resources in place to provide ongoing maintenance on a sustainable basis.
- c) The Enhancement Partnership's Evelyn Knowles reported on progress with a related funding application.

It was unanimously resolved:

that the Town Council in principle supports the concept of an Adult Fitness area and will give assistance in progressing it with a view to entering negotiations with the Isle of Wight Council for the leasing of the site when all relevant information is available.

Councillor Jim Toogood did not vote on this matter.

207/10 ISLE OF WIGHT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

- a) Councillor Chris Bonney introduced this item and, with the Mayor's permission, linked it with Agenda item 14.
 - b) He outlined his role in progressing the Town Council's concern about the inadequate opportunity for Ventnor residents' involvement in the consultation process for the Draft
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Shoreline Management Plan and set out the actions he had initiated.

- c) These had included a request for legal advice from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) through the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWALC) that had received no relevant response.
 - d) He had raised the same issue at the routine IWALC meeting and again had been disappointed by their response.
 - e) In conclusion he asked that the Town Council consider its future membership of IWALC on the basis of this experience.
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208/10 TRAFFIC ORDERS

- a) Councillor Harry Rees said that it was now clear that neither the Sandown nor the Ventnor new Fire Stations would be build and that consequently there would be no need for the restrictive proposals in the Old Station Road Order.
- b) Councillor Gilly Jenner said that she found these proposals draconian and a serious further threat to Ventnor's businesses and economy.

It was unanimously resolved:

that the Town Council object to this proposal and asked that further proposals be submitted once the situation in respect of the Fire Stations has been clarified

It was unanimously resolved:

the Newport Road Order be welcomed.

It was unanimously resolved:

The Town Council sees no problem with the proposed High Street timing changes.

209/10 ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL CONSULTATIONS

- a) SPENDING REVIEW & CONSULTATION PROTOCOL
 - o Councillor Harry Rees drew attention to the proposed withdrawal of the existing consultation protocol in order to allow the Isle of Wight Council to bring their budget proposals forward.
 - o The Budget Consultation Spending Review was being considered at a meeting on 12 November in the context of a letter from the Chief Executive which implied that the decisions had already been made.
 - o The letter from Council Leader David Pugh stated that the Council was looking to reduce its spend in the coming year by 14%, significantly more than that necessary to achieve the government driven 25% reduction over three years.
 - o Councillor Chris Bonney explained that the invitation to the meeting was for two Town Councillors and the Town Clerk with one being the IWALC representative and the other the Mayor to meeting with David Pugh on 22 November.
 - o Councillor Gilly Jenner recommended that a letter be sent to David Pugh noting the conflict between his statement of the value the authority places on Town and Parish Councils and the removal of effective consultation with them.
 - o Councillor Steve Stubbings noted the implications in the David Pugh letter for the Winter Gardens.

It was resolved:

that the Town Council's anger at the disregarding of established consultation processes and the dismissal of Town Councils be communicated to David Pugh; and Councillor Harry Rees be appointed to attend the 18 November meeting.

PUBLIC FORUM

The Mayor re-opened the Public Forum

A member of the public asked about the significance of the Draft Shoreline Management Plan

for Ventnor and Councillor Chris Bonney responded. It was specifically noted that this had implications for the management of the Military Road.

211/10 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

In view of the confidential nature of the following item:

It was resolved under the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings (1960) Act: to exclude the Public and Press whilst item 15 is under discussion as it is of a confidential nature.

212/10 WINTER GARDENS: NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

- a) The Mayor reported on discussions with a potential investor in the bar and catering function and separate discussions with a potential Entertainments provider.
- b) After discussion, it was agreed that these discussions had potential and should be explored on a confidential basis.
- c) Councillor Harry Rees stated the need for a clear brief for the meeting with the Isle of Wight Council.

It was unanimously resolved:

that Councillors Debby Robinson and Harry Rees together with the Town Clerk be authorised to meet with the relevant Isle of Wight Council representatives as soon as possible to:

- make clear that their proposed new Management Agreement is neither acceptable nor, in the circumstances, necessary;
 - secure payment of the outstanding Management Fee for the current year;
 - obtain clarity about the Isle of Wight Council's intentions for the future of the Winter Gardens and the terms and conditions of any offer to transfer ownership to Ventnor Town Council; and
 - protect the cash flow position of the Winter Gardens to 31 March 2011.
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The Meeting closed at 9.25pm

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR	DATE
