



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

ST MARGARET'S HALL

7PM

10 FEBRUARY 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors: Steve Stubbings (Mayor), Jason Mack, Leigh Geddes, Harry Rees, Stewart Blackmore, Ken Knapman, Tony Marvin, Ed Gouge, Terry Gibbs, Brian Lucas, Jim Toogood.

County Councillor Graham Perks sent his apologies.

NO. SUBJECT

PUBLIC FORUM

- a) The Mayor opened the Public Forum with 5 members of the public present.
- b) Maureen Cawley said that Ventnor Enhancement Fund is planning to introduce floral displays throughout the town and she hoped that those arranged by the Town Council would be equally colourful. Councillor Leigh Geddes responded that she had had a discussion with the Botanic Gardens about the need for this year's display to be brighter.
- c) The Mayor thanked Maureen Cawley and the Enhancement Fund for their continuing contribution to the life of the town.
- d) The Mayor welcomed Councillor Terry Gibbs to his first meeting

13/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence as all Members were present.

14/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor declared an interest as a County Councillor.

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

15/14 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- a) The Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 13 January 2014, having been previously circulated to Members, were taken as read.
- b) The Minutes of the Town Council's Planning Committee meetings of 4 February 2014 were received.

16/14 ISLE OF ARTS

- a) Janneke Oxley gave a short presentation on the plans for this year's Isle of Arts Festival and began by announcing that the Festival, now in its 4th year, was moving from usual diary slot to the May Bank Holiday.
 - b) She stressed that the Isle of Arts remained committed to showcasing local talent and there would again be Workshops especially for children including a ukulele workshop.
 - c) Good quality acts are also being engaged with an attractive line-up already signed up including Timothy West with readings from the Great War in St Catherine's Church.
 - d) She went on to say that for the first time the Festival would also be delivering some entertainment in the town itself, with the support of Ventnor Business Association.
 - e) Councillor Terry Gibbs asked if the excellent leaflet she had circulated was also being distributed on the mainland and Janneke responded that the proportion of bookings from the mainland was already higher than last year's 15%.
 - f) The Mayor thanked Janneke and her colleagues for the value their work brings to the town.
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17/14 FINANCE REPORT

- a) The Finance report for this meeting (8/14) had been previously circulated to Members and included information on Bank Balances at 31 January 2014 and a list of payments made during January 2014.
- b) An accompanying paper set out expenditure in relation to the Budget lines for the year to 31 January 2014 with variances from year-to-date budget provision.
- c) It was noted that the Option to Tax in respect of Salisbury Gardens had now been formally registered and was effective from 1 February 2014.

It was unanimously resolved that:
the Finance Report be accepted.

18/14 2014/15 BUDGET & PRECEPT

- a) The Mayor repeated his Declaration of Interest in this item and withdrew from the table and took no part in the discussion or decision. The Deputy Mayor took the Chair for this item,
 - b) Report 9/14 outlined in detail the rationale behind the draft Budget for 2014/15 attached to the Report and for the Precept consequent on it.
 - d) The main reason for the proposed Budget increase was a contingency provision of £46,000 to be deployed in order to protect any of the town's valued services for which funding is withdrawn as a consequence of the Budget reduction faced by the Isle of Wight Council,
 - e) Councillor Tony Marvin commended the Budget to Members given firstly the desire to retain local services in the Ventnor Town area where they were at risk owing to the Isle of Wight Council's intention of ceasing funding for discretionary services; and secondly the ongoing risk that our power to set a precept may be limited by Central Government.
 - f) Councillor Brian Lucas added his support for the Budget on the grounds that every line had been properly scrutinised and found to be necessary. He said that he had been pleased to be informed of the new development in the Economic Development Officer's role.
 - g) Councillor Ed Gouge said he also supported the increase in the Precept as he was reassured that the increased expenditure was essential to retain local services and that it had been supported through the consultation meeting. He expressed serious concern about the impact on local government of the major and rapid cuts being imposed by central government.
 - h) The Deputy Mayor welcomed the fact that in these circumstances Ventnor Town Council was taking back the power to maintain valued local services.
 - i) Councillor Harry Rees noted that all Councils are now in uncharted waters and he was concerned that localising services that had been Island wide would result in higher costs. He said responsibility for the changes needed to be directed at central government.
 - j) Councillor Stewart Blackmore said it was important to explain the need for this significant increase to residents and the Town Council would continue its good practice of informing residents. He concluded by commending the Budget.
 - k) Councillor Ken Knapman added his support, stressing that localism had to be funded, particularly in these circumstances
 - l) Councillor Leigh Geddes supported the Budget as the increase was required to maintain and improve important local services.
 - m) Councillor Terry Gibbs said that as a new Member the introduction to the issues had been daunting. Although at first sight the increase had been worrying he was now able to support the Budget given the care he had seen going into its preparation and the support the reasons for the increase had received from the public consultation.
 - n) Councillor Jim Toogood said he supported the Budget in order to retain Ventnor's attraction for residents and visitors alike.
 - o) The Deputy Mayor acknowledged the fact that many residents had lost their right to total
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Council Tax rebate and endorsed Councillor Toogood's point about the need to get best value for the services the Town Council will be purchasing.

It was unanimously resolved that the Town Council:

- i) formally adopts the attached draft as its Budget for 2014/15;
 - ii) sets the Precept income to fund it at £202,682, reduced to £182,299 by the grant from the Isle of Wight Council, for that year and representing a £77.77 charge for the year per Band D Council Tax paying household; and
 - iii) asks the Town Clerk to inform the Isle of Wight Council accordingly.
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19/14 SALISBURY GARDENS

- a) The Mayor returned to the Chair at this point.
 - b) Report 10/14 for this meeting provided an update on developments since the last meeting in respect of the future management of Salisbury Gardens.
 - c) It was noted that subject to formal agreement of the leasing of the building to Ventnor Town Council at the Cabinet Meeting of 11 February 2014 the building works programme would start at by the end of the month with it being open for business by 1 June 2014.
 - d) It was further noted that agreement had been reached at Officer level on a rent level of 7.5% of gross income following a first year rent free.
 - e) The evidence of local interest in taking business start-up spaces was welcomed as was the agreement with Hampshire Constabulary in respect of four ground floor rooms.
 - f) Councillor Harry Rees referred to the decision taken by the Isle of Wight Council's Scrutiny Committee last Thursday to ask for a delay in the decision. The Mayor responded that he would be able to provide further information in the discussion at Agenda item 14.
 - g) Councillor Stewart Blackmore said the Town Council was fortunate to have the experience of Councillor Jim Toogood available to it for this important project.
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20/14 OUR PLACE!

- a) The background to the Town Council's involvement with the government's *Our Place!* programme was set out in Report 11/14 for this meeting together with the benefits for the town of applying to be one of the 160 areas being recruited for this stage of the programme's development.
- b) Councillor Ken Knapman said he wanted to endorse the application and felt it was important to develop a model and an Operational Plan that reflected Ventnor's distinctiveness.

It was unanimously resolved that the Town Council:

authorises the Town Clerk, working with staff colleagues, to complete and submit an application to the Department for Communities and Local Government's *Our Place!* programme.

21/14 ISLAND FREE SCHOOL

- a) Local concerns about the potential impact of the new Island Free School on the Upper Ventnor and the Lowtherville community as expressed in recent meetings of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Clerks with the Upper Ventnor Community Association (UVCA) were recorded in Report 12/14 and reported to the meeting by the Mayor.
- b) Councillor Brian Lucas suggested that UVCA be asked to frame specific questions to be put to the Free School.

It was unanimously resolved that the Town Council:

agrees to invite representatives of The Island School to its next meeting.

22/14 IWALC REPORT

- a) Councillor Harry Rees reported on recent developments in the work of the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils.
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- b) He referred to the IWALC Conference being held on Thursday with 90 signed up to attend.
 - c) He said that the IWALC submission about Assisted Area Status had now been submitted to government and been published to IWALC members and the press. He understood that moves were underway to achieve the inclusion of Ventnor in the Assisted Area Map from which it had been excluded in the initial version.
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23/14 TOWN CLERKS' REPORT

The report from the Town Clerks – 13/14 – provided information about the Annual Consultation Event, the Ventnor Botanic Gardens, Cooking Workshops, Training Courses and a Grant Application.

PUBLIC FORUM

The Mayor re-opened the Public Forum

- a) Maureen Cawley said that she found the Precept increase very substantial and wanted assurance that the £46,000 element to fund services at risk would be ring-fenced for that purpose and the Deputy Mayor assured her that was the case.
 - b) Wendy Marshall commented on a particular problem with dog excrement and had informed the police accordingly.
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THE MEETING CLOSED AT 9.10 PM

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR	DATE
