



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

WINTER GARDENS

7PM

19 JANUARY 2011

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 145 members of the public present

- a) A member of the public asked about the involvement of the Town's County Councillors in discussions of devolved services and Councillor Steve Stubbings replied that they were unable to be present tonight as they were attending a full meeting of the Isle of Wight Council but that they would be involved in a future consultation meeting.
- b) Another member of the public asked why the County Council used the most expensive contractors for maintenance work and the Isle of Wight Council's Head of Property Services explained the tendering arrangements that were already in place.
- c) Concern was expressed about the disposal of Winter Gardens contents in view of their importance for potential buyers.
- d) Another question focused on what would happen if there was not a purchaser for the building. The Isle of Wight Council's Deputy Director, Economy, Tourism and Leisure, John Metcalfe responded that he was very hopeful that a buyer would be found.
- e) The issue of the marketing timetable was raised and John Metcalfe said that they hoped to arrive at a preferred bidder within 6-8 weeks of the publication of the invitation to express an interest.
- f) The meeting began at 7.15pm.

1/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

2/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Debby Robinson declared a prejudicial interest in item 15.

Councillors Gillian Jenner and Chris Bonney declared personal interests as Directors of Isle of Arts.

3/11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- a) The minutes of the Town Council meetings of 13 December 2010 were considered.

It was unanimously resolved by those present at the meeting:

that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 13 December be agreed as an accurate record of the business of that meeting and be signed accordingly by the Mayor.

- b) The minutes of the Town Council meetings of 22 December 2010 were considered.

It was unanimously resolved:

that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 22 December be agreed as an accurate record of the business of that meeting and be signed accordingly by the Mayor

4/11 FINANCE

- a) The Finance report for this meeting had been previously circulated to Members and included information on Bank Balances at 31 December 2010 and a list of payments made during December 2010.
 - b) An accompanying paper set out the Precept related expenditure in the first nine months of the current financial year.
 - c) The report also confirmed that the Annual Audit for the financial year 2009/10 had now been completed by the Audit Commission and Section 3 of the External Auditor's report was attached for Members' information. The relevant sections of the Annual return will be publicly displayed for the statutory 14 days along with the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and the Right to Inspect the Annual Return.
-

5/11 WINTER GARDENS

- a) The Winter Gardens report for this meeting had been previously circulated to Members and included information on the latest sales levels, the closure of the Winter Gardens from 31 January 2011, staffing matters, final inventories and the future of the facility.
 - b) The Public Meeting on the background to and the reasons for the closure took place on Wednesday 12 January with a theatre capacity audience that saw a 30-minute presentation from the Town Clerk and participated in a two hour question and answer session with Members.
-

6/11 TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE AND MEETING ROOMS

- a) Councillors David George reported on his and Councillor Jim Toogood's investigations of alternative office accommodation.
- b) He went on to comment on venues for future meetings of the Town Council, reminding members of an earlier suggestion of rotating meetings around suitable premises in each of the Town's Wards.

It was unanimously resolved:

that suitable venues in each of the Town's Wards be sought for future meetings of the Town Council.

7/11 STAFFING COMMITTEE

The two versions for Terms of Reference for a Staffing Committee previously circulated by the Town Clerk were considered.

It was unanimously resolved that:

A Staffing Committee be appointed with version B as its Terms of Reference and Councillors Harry Rees, Gillian Jenner, Chris Bonney and Steve Stubbings as its members.

8/11 BUDGET CUTS AND PROVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES

- a) Councillor Harry Rees introduced this item. He reported on his attendance at an Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWLAC) meeting on the cuts attended by the Leader of the Council.
- b) He expressed serious concern that the consultation process was meaningless as decisions had already been taken and that he for one was committed to fighting for the retention of services, reminding the meeting that a public meeting would be arranged by the Town Council for open discussion of the issues.

It was unanimously resolved:

that the Public Meeting be held at the Winter Gardens on Monday 24 January 2011 at 7pm.

9/11 VENTNOR LIBRARY

- a) Councillor David George introduced this item by stating his view that closing libraries was absolutely unacceptable.
-

- b) He said that the IoWC is planning the closure of 9 of the 11 Island libraries and hoped that opposition would be widespread and include Ventnor residents and its Town Council.
- c) He provided some statistics: Ventnor Library has 1,900 active library members, almost a third of the Town's population; 60% of Ventnor Library users only use Ventnor library; 220 children aged 5-11 are active Library members; 154 children took part in the summer reading challenge it organised and the library had 57,000 visits last year.
- d) Cultural vandalism was the term that best described the proposed plans.
- e) Opposition included a planned action at Newport Library this coming Saturday involving maximum book withdrawal from 10am.
- a) Councillor Rees referred to the Wirral experience where a legal challenge to similar proposals resulted in a change of policy. Councillor David George said that similar action was being considered at Somerset.

It was unanimously resolved:

that this Town Council strongly condemns the proposal to close Ventnor Library.

10/11 TOILETS IN VENTNOR

- b) Councillor Gillian Jenner introduced this item, pointing out that there are six public toilets in Ventnor due for disposal.
- c) She stressed the serious effect this would have on residents and their children as well as tourists and expressed the hope that there would be island wide opposition to the proposed closures.
- d) Councillor Steve Stubbings pointed out that Ventnor was being particularly penalised by the proposed changes and hoped that Town Council and residents would join in absolute opposition to the proposals.
- e) Councillor Bonney suggested that over time Ventnor has consistently been under-resourced and it would be a worthwhile exercise to list a range of issues comparing Ventnor with other principle areas of the Island.

It was unanimously resolved:

that this Town Council strongly urges the IoWC to reconsider their proposed closure of toilets in Ventnor given that of the 32 public toilets on the Island 8 are in Ventnor and Ventnor would become the only town in the Island without a public toilet in its Town Centre.

11/11 LIFEGUARDS

- a) Councillor Jim Toogood introduced this item. He said that he had been in discussion with Mark Compton-Hall about the future provision of safeguarding service and had held a meeting with potential volunteers.
- b) It is now clear that no funding is available as had been hoped and although it was thought the IoWC would transfer the beach hut to the Town Council the total cost of the provision of the service would be of the order of £25,000.

Fund raising suggestions were considered.

It was unanimously resolved:

that this Town Council abhors the loss of the Lifeguard services in Ventnor and on the Island as a whole which will be seriously detrimental both to residents and tourists.

12/11 BUTTERFLY TOWN SIGNS

Councillor David George introduced this item. He said that he had been in contact with the co-ordinator of the Butterfly Town project who had asked that this matter be included on the agenda of the February meeting.

13/11 PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

14/11 PLANNING APPLICATION

- a) Planning application P/01798/10 introduced by the Chair of the Planning Committee as comment was required by 21 January 2011.
- b) He said that he could see no reason to object to the application.

It was resolved with three abstentions that:
the Town Council sees no reason to object to the proposed development

15/11 FOOTPATH CLOSURES

- a) Councillor Debby Robinson left the room at this point.
 - b) Councillor Chris Bonney reported on the reasons for the failure to date to progress the concerns on this matter and said that he was now leading on it. He invited residents to contact him with any information or concerns they had.
 - c) Councillor Debby Robinson rejoined the meeting at this point.
-

16/11 SALT BINS

The Mayor said that she felt it would be a useful addition to the Town Centre if two suitable Salt Bins were purchased before next winter.

It was unanimously resolved:
that the Town Clerk be asked to investigate competitive charges.

PUBLIC FORUM

The Mayor re-opened the Public Forum

- a) A member of the public drew attention to a petition for rejecting the proposed closure of the Library in the room for signature.
 - b) Another member of the public asked if the Town Council would take on the provision of the library service if the Isle of Wight Council refuses to reconsider its decision.
 - c) Access to planning applications through the Town Council's website would be welcome and the Town Clerk said that routine posting of them would be available from next week.
 - d) A request was made for the Library Consultation document to be available on the Town Council web site.
 - e) A suggestion that national publicity be sought for the damage that was being done to Ventnor by the Isle of Wight Council's proposals was welcomed by the meeting.
 - f) The possibility of community involvement in the decision about the purchaser of the Winter Gardens was raised and Councillor Steve Stubbings responded by stressing the commitment of the Town Council to ensure continued community use of the facility.
 - g) The injustice of double taxation in order to preserve a local library service was highlighted together with a plea that the Town Council challenges the Isle of Wight Council by itemising the damage to Ventnor, particularly in view of its very significant contribution to the Island's tourism offer.
-

The Meeting closed at 8.45 pm

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR	DATE
