



# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

GREEN ROOM, SALISBURY GARDENS

7PM

11 OCTOBER 2021

Members Present

Councillors: Stephen Cockett (Chair) Steph Toogood, Ian Bond, James Toogood, Brian Lucas, Phil Warren, John Watkins, Steve Cooper, Mark Jefferies

## MINUTE SUBJECT

### PUBLIC FORUM

There was one member of the public present. County Councillor Rodney Downer was also present.

- a) Stuart George, Chair of the Island's Bus and Rail Users Group, raised the issue of the cancellation of the 31 Bus with references to the Town Council's recent decisions, stating that closure without a replacement was unacceptable.
- b) He stressed the importance of providing transport for those without it and the contribution the service makes to moving away from the use of cars given the climate emergency and asked that a replacement service be developed.
- c) The Mayor responded with a report on efforts to establish a volunteer base to develop an alternative that produced only four responses, adding that the working group would meet again soon.
- d) County Councillor Rodney Downer praised Councillors Steve Cooper and Mark Jefferies for establishing a Friends of the Cemetery Group and informed the Council of the need to fell a tree in Upper Ventnor.
- e) He went on to mention concerns in Bonchurch about recent flooding and plans for investigating the area's drains and clearing blockages. He said he is due to contact Lee Matthews about concerns of rats around Boniface Pond.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Steph Toogood and James Toogood each declared an Interest in Agenda Item 8.

### 102/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Julie Hutchison.

### 103/21 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 13 September 2021, having been previously circulated to Members, were taken as read.

### 104/21 VACANCY IN LOWTHERVILLE

- a) Report 79/21 identified the current vacancy for a Town Councillor to represent the Lowtherville Ward and the processes for filling it.
- b) The vacancy was created by the resignation of Colm Watling and the Mayor recorded his thanks to him for his contribution to the Town Council's work.
- c) The formal notice was attached to the Report.
- d) Councillor Mark Jefferies reported on the canvassing of the area he and Councillor Steve Cooper had done to facilitate residents completing the formalities to trigger a by-election.

### 105/21 FINANCE REPORT

- a) The Finance Report for this meeting, 80/21, had been previously circulated to Members and included information on Bank Balances at 30 September 2021 and a list of all payments made

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during September 2021.

- b) Also included was a listing of budget variances during the first six months of the financial year.

**It was proposed by Councillor James Toogood, seconded by Councillor Steve Cooper and unanimously resolved that:**  
the Finance Report be accepted

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106/21 **CENTRAL CAR PARK BAYS: HEADS OF TERMS**

The Isle of Wight Council's proposed Heads of Terms for the Lease of the four car park bays in the Central Car Park that will be occupied by the new Public Toilets was attached to Report 81/21 for this meeting.

**It was proposed by Councillor Brian Lucas, seconded by Councillor Phil Warren and unanimously resolved to:**

- i) request the changes identified in section (2) of Report 81/21 for this meeting; and
  - ii) authorise the Clerk, advised by the Assets and Services Working Group, to progress the Heads of Terms to completion.
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107/21 **VENTNOR PARK: TREE TREATMENT AND AVIARY**

- a) Proposals by the Assets and Services Working Group for the treatment of the four trees identified as struggling with exposed roots and the potential removal of the now redundant Aviary were set out in Report 82/21
- b) The Mayor asked about an earlier treatment proposal and Councillor James Toogood explained the discussions he had subsequently had with the Isle of Wight Council's Tree Officer who recommended covering with earth and turfing and felt another meeting with the Senior Tree Officer would be the next step.
- c) He added that a quotation for the work had been provided by Dixie Landscaping.
- d) Councillor Ian Bond said he felt that this was a better solution than the suggestion of mulching the areas.
- e) Councillor John Watkins suggested that creative uses of the space to encourage exercise be explored.

**It was proposed by Councillor Mark Jefferies, seconded by Councillor John Watkins and unanimously resolved to:**  
commission the works described in sections (2) and (3) of Report 82/21 on the basis of the identified quotations.

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108/21 **SECOND HOMES AND HOLIDAY LETS**

- a) Report 83/21 recorded the concerns raised by Members about Housing on the Island and in Ventnor in particular by the Island Planning Strategy Working Group.
  - b) The Mayor introduced the item as one of the major subjects to be addressed by this Council given the impact on local residents and the town's future.
  - c) He asked Members to note that the reference in the Report to other local authorities should read as other jurisdictions as the policies listed are those deployed in a range of other countries.
  - d) Councillor Brian Lucas said that he understood that Oxford Council had introduced taxes on properties transferred to holiday lets and felt that the Isle of Wight Council could do the same.
  - e) Councillor John Watkins referred to the increased fear many current tenants have of eviction given the extremely limited availability of other homes.
  - f) Councillor Steve Cooper remarked that the issue affected his main concern - the Climate Crisis - as the more houses that have to be built the greater the damage and that he felt there is a role for the Town Council in achieving a better balance.
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- g) Councillor James Toogood commented that he felt strongly that changing accommodation to holiday lets should require planning permission.
  - h) Councillor Ian Bond pointed out that the solution requires action at national level, adding that the way was being led by the West Country and that this Council should encourage the Isle of Wight Council to team up with Principal Authorities in areas already exploring mitigation options.
  - i) The Mayor said that the Isle of Wight Council should use every means possible and raise its priority level.
  - j) Councillor Step Toogood urged the provision of more affordable housing.
  - k) Councillor Ian Bond added that it is much cheaper in the UK to keep properties empty than in other countries where annual property taxes appl.
  - l) Councillor John Watkins stressed the particular importance of addressing this issue for towns like Ventnor with relatively high levels of deprivation.

**It was proposed by Councillor John Watkin, seconded by Councillor Ian Bond and unanimously resolved to rhequest the Isle of Wight Council to:**

- i) use every legal change possible in relation to the ownership of second homes and change of use to holiday lets to mitigate the current level of growth in both areas;
- ii) provide the Island's Town and Parish Councils with statistics for the number of homes in their area that are either second homes or registered as holiday lets on a quarterly basis to enable them to monitor local changes in both; and
- iii) work with other Principal Authorities of holiday and coastal communities to explore and jointly lobby for mitigation options.

**It was further unanimously resolved to:**

share these concerns with the Island's MP and ask for his support in addressing them.

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#### 109/21 TOWN CLERKS' REPORT

- a) The Town Clerks' Report – 84/21 – recorded recent activity which did not require Town Council decisions at this time.
  - b) It included Staff changes, new Steps at Boniface Fields, the Haven, Grounds Maintenance Awards, Network, the Lease for Ventnor Community Shed and the dates of the Working Groups.
  - c) The Mayor asked that the Town Council's formal appreciation of Morgan Williams' work for the Town Council over the more than five years of his time here be recorded and sent to hm.
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The meeting closed at 8.07pm

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR

DATE

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