



ASSET TRANSFER

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 106/15

14 DECEMBER 2015

The purpose of this paper is to report on developments in the transfer of various assets from the Isle of Wight Council to the Town Council.

No. DETAIL

1) BACKGROUND

- a) Faced with a budget gap of anything between £10M and £16M for the 2016/17 financial year the Isle of Wight Council is continuing its drive to achieve savings by asking Town and Parish Council to take on the costs of a range of assets and services.
 - b) The 27 October meeting of its Executive included two decisions with direct implications for Ventnor: the change in the status of its Public Library and its invitation to Town and Parish Councils to enter Expressions of Interest in taking on management of Public Toilets in their area.
 - c) The Leader of the Isle of Wight Council invited representatives of the larger Town and Parish Councils – including Ventnor – to meet with him on Tuesday 3 November and representatives of all the other Town and Parish Councils to meet with him the following day to discuss further potential transfers.
 - d) Representatives were then invited to a follow-up meeting with him and Chief Executive John Metcalfe on Monday 7 December to continue to explore those possibilities.
 - e) Meanwhile, in recognition of the progress this Town Council has already made in this direction of travel, the Mayor and Town Clerk were invited to meet with John Metcalfe on Wednesday 25 November to discuss a list of potential transfers derived from the discussions of the Public Buildings Working Group.
 - f) The Major will report directly on the meetings referred to above while the remainder of this Report includes related information.
 - g) Although Ventnor Library and Ventnor Central were included in the list discussed at the meeting with John Metcalfe, they are not referred to further here as they are part of well advanced separate processes and reported on in Agenda items 6 and 7 for this meeting.
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2) PUBLIC TOILETS

- a) The Isle of Wight Council's draft Budget for 2016/17 provides for total expenditure on its present 41 Public Toilets of £200,000 against an anticipated required total expenditure of £500,000
 - b) As reported to last month's Town Council meeting, this includes three Ventnor sites in a total of £36,676: Esplanade £20,796, Marlborough Road £11,853 and Ventnor Park £4,027.
 - c) On the basis that a successful appeal against Business Rates for the Esplanade toilet, the Putting Green operator taking on the cleaning of the Ventnor Park toilet and achieving savings on the cleaning bill through an in-house service would reduce the additional Precept requirement to £10,000 (8p a week for Band D taxpayers), the Town Council agreed to enter an Expression of Interest for their transfer on a freehold basis.
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3) OTHER FACILITIES

- a) The list of other facilities for potential transfer to the Town Council – also on a freehold basis – included the Children's Playgrounds at Seabreeze, North Street and Upper Ventnor and the Adult Fitness Area in Ventnor Park, Outfit: the Town Council already funds the maintenance requirement for Seabreeze and Outfit.
 - b) Also on the list are the Paddling Pool – already funded by the Town Council – the Putting Green, the Dinghy Park and the East Cliff Car Park.
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4) LAND

- a) Finally, the list included proposals for the freehold transfer of five areas of land.
- b) These are the land opposite St Boniface School, the area around the Paddling Pool, the overgrown spaces next to St Margaret's Hall and Rayners in Upper Ventnor and land occupied by the Skatepark.

5) STRATEGY

- a) The meetings with the Leader of the Isle of Wight Council have proposed an alternative approach to the funding of public toilets in the form of a Community Interest Company jointly owned by the Isle of Wight Council and the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWALC) with the funding gap of £300,000 provided by contributions from all 33 Town and Parish Councils.
 - b) It has also been suggested by the Isle of Wight Council that this approach might be extended to beach cleaning, grounds maintenance and even Principal Parks.
 - c) A similar approach to beach cleaning and grounds maintenance was proposed last summer in achieving the savings the Isle of Wight Council required to its 2015/16 Budget but proved unworkable due to the variation of responses among IWALC's membership.
 - d) It is also contrary to this Town Council's strategic objective of taking ownership of as many of the town's assets as possible in order both to secure their longer term future and establish and maintain the standards the town and its visitors expect.
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