



IWALC SPRING SEMINAR

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 12/16

14 MARCH 2016

The purpose of this paper is to ask Members to assess the current and future work of the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWALC) in preparation for its Spring Seminar.

No. DETAIL

1) BACKGROUND

- a) IWALC have organised a Spring Seminar at the Riverside Centre for the afternoon of Friday 15 March under the banner *A Frightening Future or a New Dawn*; a copy of the Agenda is attached to this Report for Members' information.
- b) The purpose of the Seminar has been described by IWALC's Secretary in the invitation to attend as: *to discuss your concerns due to service take on, how to best serve your parishioners and how we can face the future together.*
- c) While Ventnor Town Council not only has no concerns about taking on services but has welcomed the opportunity for local control, there are significant concerns about IWALC's recent track record in representing the interests of Town and Parish Councils in the major recent developments of the County Council Budget, Devolution and the My Life a Full Life Programme.
- d) More details on each of these areas are set out in sections (3), (4) and (5) below.

2) CONTEXT

- a) The total Precept raised by the Island's Town & Parish Councils has increased by 88% over the last three years as in the following table:

YEAR	PRECEPT TOTAL (£)	INCREASE (£)	INCREASE (%)
2013/14	1,601,509		
2014/15	2,099,804	498,295	31.11
2015/16	2,399,223	299,419	14.26
2016/17	3,011,116	611,893	25.5
TOTALS		1,409,607	88.02

- b) A substantial proportion of this £1.4M increase in the annual funding provided by Town and Parish Council precepts is undoubtedly due to what IWALC describes as *service take on*: in Ventnor's case, 80% of its £146,372 increase is the direct consequence of the assets and services the Town Council has taken on.
- c) The increase represents a substantial contribution to the Island's public realm and tourism offer that should be reflected in actual rather than notional partnership working with the Isle of Wight Council in such major decisions and developments as their Budget setting and their Devolution negotiations.
- d) That such basic Island facilities as Beach Cleaning, Grounds Maintenance, Libraries and Toilets are now dependent on the willingness of the residents Town and Parish Councils represent to take on the costs of them should be reflected in the right to be directly engaged in the planning and delivery of major services such as the My Life a Full Life programme.
- e) However, that has not been the case in any of the three areas covered in this Report.

3) ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL BUDGET SETTING

- a) The involvement of both IWALC and Town and Parish Councils in the decision-making involved in the most critical Budget of recent years was minimal.
- b) Apart from a presentation of the proposals to one IWALC meeting, the only reference to Town

and Parish Councils involvement in the Consultation feedback to the Budget setting Full Council meeting (Appendix G) was: *the budget was also included upon the agenda of a monthly town and parish council meeting.*

- c) That Town Council – Ventnor – made a detailed submission following that meeting to the consultation process. Significantly, the submission was made after Appendix G had been presented to the Executive Meeting of 11 February although still within the consultation deadline of 12 February.
- d) Appendix G remained unchanged when included in the papers for the Full Council meeting of 24 February leaving the issues raised in Ventnor Town Council’s submission unreported.
- e) For its part, IWALC appears not to have developed or submitted any formal response or sought any focused engagement in the decision making. Given the particular impact of the Budget as set on the poorest and most vulnerable of the residents its members represent, that should surely not happen in future.
- f) *Fight4thewight* is no substitute for considered, informed and strategically significant representation in the discussions to come as the Isle of Wight Council rapidly approaches financial failure, of Town and Parish Councils through their representative body.

4) DEVOLUTION

- a) Both IWALC and its members have been completely excluded from what is likely to become the biggest change to local government for over 40 years: Devolution.
- b) The government, through the Department for Communities and Local Government, has said that Town and Parish Councils should be involved in the negotiations; the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has said that Town and Parish Councils should be involved in the negotiations; the Isle of Wight Council says Town and Parish Councils will have the chance to comment when agreement has been reached.
- c) For its part, IWALC appears on this issue also to have been side-lined, neither asked for its views or expected to offer them.

5) MY LIFE A FULL LIFE PROGRAMME

- a) The core objective of the programme – the integration of the Island’s health and wellbeing services is clearly one to be welcomed and supported by Town and Parish Councils for the benefit it aims to bring to the residents they represent.
- b) Its achievement in becoming one of the government’s 50 *Vanguard* pilot areas has enabled it to draw on funds of some £8M over the three year period and, inevitably, become caught up in ever increasing bureaucratisation that few outside the programme can make sense of.
- c) A classic example appeared in the latest edition of the programme’s latest *Update* newsletter in the form of one of the longest job descriptions ever: *Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) and Technology Enabled Care (TEC) Manager!*
- d) The issue, however, is that not only are Town and Parish Councils excluded from significant engagement, the programme continues to state that they are included, as in this assertion in that latest edition of *Update*:

As part of the My Life a Full Life Programme aims of working together more closely in the community, Locality Health & Wellbeing Forums have been running in each of the three localities across the Island, since last summer. They meet once every three months and are a chance for voluntary groups, town and parish councils and patient representatives to share their views on any issue about health and wellbeing.

- e) Ventnor Town Council has been represented by its staff at all four meetings of the South Wight Locality Health and Wellbeing Forum. None have been attended by more than 15 people with the majority at all of them being staff involved with the My Life a Full Life programme or
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organisations connected with it.

- f) At the latest meeting, on 25 February, apart from the staff, only one Clerk and two members of the public were present.
 - g) The *Update* description of the Forums' role is:
The forums' views are gathered at the meeting and then passed to the Locality Management Group which meets monthly and includes representatives for GPs, Public Health, Social services, Community nursing and Mental Health, alongside Paul Savill for the voluntary and community sector. The Groups then looks at what can be done to tackle the issues raised and any follow up actions that might be required.
 - h) Unfortunately, there has been no evidence of that process in practice in the South Wight area.
 - i) Central to the problem is that the programme has chosen to view Town and Parish Councils as simply part of the voluntary sector, rather than the elected, representative, accountable statutory organisations they actually are.
 - j) Consequently not only are Town and Parish Councils effectively excluded from this major health and wellbeing services in their areas but the programme also is denied the significant constructive contribution they would bring to it.
 - k) Yet Ventnor Town Council's proposal for its Community Development Officer to act as the link with the area's 13 Town and Parish Councils as a participating member of the Locality Management Group, although submitted through several channels has been ignored.
 - l) IWALC, meanwhile, has had no role at all.
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6) ISLE OF WIGHT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

- a) IWALC's Constitution sets the organisation two top line objectives. The first is to represent the interests of Town and Parish Council; the second has more detail:
To provide support and co-ordination to all aspects of the work of Local Councils, as embodied in the following principles of good local government.
 - o *To promote the health, safety and well being, both material and cultural of the people in its various communities.*
 - o *To attract and hold the interests of its citizens.*
 - o *To develop inherent strength to deal with, and work with all other tiers of local, regional and national government.*
 - o *To adapt itself to change in response to the needs of citizens in the local community.*
 - o *To protect, consolidate and develop the existing rights, privileges and functions of Local Councils.*
 - b) It clearly has insufficient resources as currently organised to provide support and co-ordination to all aspects of the work if its Members as its lack of engagement with the three major areas identified in this Report demonstrate.
 - c) Its (very) part-time Secretary does an excellent job in circulating information and maintaining records but the engagement this Town Council would like to see will need to come from IWALC's substantial and experienced volunteer base and matching re-organisation to include working groups on major issues.
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7) RECOMMENDATION

Members are recommended to consider the role of the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils and how it can be strengthened for the future.



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SPRING SEMINAR

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

A FRIGHTENING FUTURE OR A NEW DAWN?

FRIDAY 18 MARCH – 1330 TO 1630

The Riverside Centre, Newport, Isle of Wight

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| 1300 | Registration |
| 1330 | Welcome and Opening Remarks by Gill Kennett, Chairman of IWALC |
| 1340 | Presentation by Trevor Leggo, Chief Executive of Sussex and Surrey Association of Local Councils |
| 1430 | Working with New Partners – Mike Bulpitt, CEO of Community Action Isle of Wight |
| 1445 | Update from NALC – Justin Griggs, Head of Policy & Development at NALC |
| 1515 | Break for refreshments |
| 1530 | Workshop sessions led by:-

David Bartlett, Ventnor TC
Tina Bailey, East Cowes TC and Chair of SLCC
Sue Chilton, Trainer |
| 1600 | Questions and Answers – opportunity to raise any queries with Trevor Leggo, Mike Bulpitt and Justin Griggs |
| 1630 | Close |