



LOCALISM UPDATE

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 55/13

15 JULY 2013

The purpose of this report is provide Members with the latest information on developments in the town's engagement with the localism agenda and to seek approval for a proposal to extend the Town Council's commitment to this agenda.

No. DETAIL

1) INTRODUCTION

- a) The new political leadership of the Isle of Wight Council (IoWC) has brought with it a very positive commitment to the Localism Agenda that is driven not only by the Government's Localism Act of 2011 but also by a combination of the increasingly limited resources available to principal authorities and a view that local communities are best at determining their priorities and delivering at least some of the linked services directly.
 - b) An immediate consequence for the town and its Council has been the withdrawal of the previous administration's policy of selling assets. Instead, discussions with Town & Parish Councils will be entered into directly where there is a clear interest in and plans for their use(s) of real value to their residents.
 - c) The Localism Agenda also involves a commitment to include those residents in an ongoing process of engagement with these developments that involves moving beyond conventional consultation to more participative structures.
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2) THE COASTAL CENTRE

- a) The retention of this iconic building for which the Town Council has been arguing for over 18 months and which was strongly endorsed by over 30% of the town's residents is now a matter of direct negotiation with the IoWC in a positive and constructive context.
 - b) The process starts on Tuesday 16 July when the Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk have been invited to meet with the IoWC's Director of Economy & Environment Stuart Love, his Deputy John Metcalfe and the relevant Cabinet Member for Resources John Gilbey.
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3) REW VALLEY SPORTS CENTRE

- a) The funding for this local facility runs out on 31 March next year under current IoWC proposals and, as Members are aware, discussions have already started to explore other options for its ownership and operation.
 - b) The next stage in those discussions is a meeting the Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk will attend on Friday 19 July.
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4) CONNECTED LOCALISM

- a) Connected Localism is the title of a collection of essays on the future of Localism published last month by the Local Government Information Unit. One of these, by Anthony Zacharzewski, is based on the view that: *a democratic localism will have three central characteristics, all mutually reinforcing. It will be open, it will be networked and it will be democratically run.*
 - b) This is reflected in government thinking through the 12 pilots it has recently funding under the banner of Neighbourhood Community Budgets, now rebranded as *Our Place!* The Town Council's Participation in the National Association of Local Council's Conferences has provided direct connections with two of those pilot areas with whom conversations will continue.
 - c) The Town Council has already made significant progress towards connected localism: the Community events of January 2012 provided an identification of priorities for the future development of the town by over 80 representatives of the town's remarkable voluntary and community sector; the Community Day of January 2013 provided checks on both progress and
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direction; the appointment of a Community Development Worker ; the development of Ventnor Timebank and the extensive consultation on the future of the Coastal Centre are all very positive indicators of progress along this route.

- d) Both the Community Development Working Group and the staff team agree that the response to the Coastal Centre consultation provides a remarkable opportunity to develop new structures of participation by inviting those who responded to participate in future policy development.
- e) This would be achieved by a letter from the Mayor to each of the over 1,500 Ventnor residents who signed up to support the Town Council's proposals for the Centre's future: to thank them for doing so, inform them directly of the change in IoWC policy and invite them to supply an email address by which the conversation can be both continued and extended on a regular basis.
- f) Included in this invitation would be our main contact with each of the town's 70 voluntary and community organisations.
- g) If the response to these invitations is as positive as is hoped, the Town Council would then have a quality basis for connected localism enabling not only for the widest possible consultation on all major development but for receiving ideas and input from many others into that development.
- h) A designed and recognisably formatted email would be used for the Town Council's requests for feedback and part of the web site would be developed to receive it.
- i) It is recognised that this is restricted to those with email addresses, but the numbers are potentially so large that the participants will have many connections with people without email who they could then engage in the conversations. It would give around a third of the town's electorate the opportunity to connect with the Town Council in future significant decisions and the opportunity to influence them.
- j) The initial mailing would be funded from the Community Development project budget.
- k) A copy of the *Connected Localism* article is included on the web site with the papers for this meeting.

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