



# PUBLIC BUILDINGS

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 47/13

17 JUNE 2013

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the latest available information on the town's public buildings and the first meeting of the Public Buildings Working Group.

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**No.    DETAIL**

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**1)    INTRODUCTION**

- a) The Public Buildings Working Group met for the first time on Tuesday 11 June with Deputy Mayor Jason Mack as Chair with Councillors Jim Toogood, Stewart Blackmore and Tony Marvin. Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from its other member, Brian Lucas. The Clerks were also present.
  - b) This paper reports on the Group's discussion of its Scope, the use of the Community Right to Bid, the future of Rew Valley Sports Centre, the Coastal Centre and the town's Car Parks.
  - c) The Group is clear that it has no delegated powers other than those already within the Town Clerk's role and that all significant proposals will take the form of recommendations to Town Council meetings.
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**2)    SCOPE**

- a) The major focus of the Group was clearly understood to be the remaining public buildings, specifically the Coastal Centre, Rew Valley Sports Centre, the Library, the Youth Club and St Boniface School.
  - b) The Group accepted the Town Clerk's suggestion that progressing the Community Right to Challenge for local delivery of the management of the town's car parks should also be included in their remit.
  - c) Other possible buildings and areas of land were also discussed for potential inclusion in the Group's scope.
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**3)    COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID**

- a) The Town Council has already determined that St Boniface School, the Library, Rew Valley Sports Centre and St Boniface school should be nominated as Assets of Community Value under the Localism Act's Community Right to Bid.
  - b) Following the surprising refusal by the previous Isle of Wight Council (IoWC) to accept the nomination of the Coastal Centre in this context, no further nominations have been made, although two – for St Boniface School and the Library – have been prepared by the Town Clerk.
  - c) The Group felt that given the very different approach to the Localism Agenda by the new Island political leadership and their understanding that the Community Right to Bid simply enables a locality to have the buildings that are important to it recognised as Community Assets, the previous decisions of the Town Council should now be actioned.
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**4)    CAR PARKS**

- a) The Town Clerk reported that the IoWC's policy for the implementation of the Localism Act's Community Right to Challenge provided for a three month period in each financial year for which they would invite Expressions of Interest for the local management of any relevant IoWC service. The window is defined as 1 June to 30 September.
  - b) Members will recall that the Town Council had accessed external funding for a consultant – Andy Stafford of Parkspace Consulting – to prepare a feasibility report as the basis for an Expression of Interest in the management of the town's eight car parks.
  - c) The IoWC had yet to issue the invitation and the Group was clear that they should be requested to do so as soon as possible.
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**5) REW VALLEY SPORTS CENTRE**

- a) As previously reported, the future funding of the Rew Valley Sports Centre is in doubt and under the threat of closure at 31 March next year.
- b) The Group shared the clear view of the Town Council that all possible steps should be taken to prevent the loss of such an important facility located in one of the town's most deprived areas.
- c) Discussions had already taken place with the IoWC's Recreation, Leisure and Public Spaces Manager, Alex Minns who is also fully committed to finding a sustainable future for the Centre.
- d) The proposal is for the establishment of a Community Trust of some kind with the Town Council at its centre and involving as partners the town's very well established and wide ranging sporting organisations.
- e) Alex Minns has even identified a member of staff to work with us on the necessary due diligence and research into the most appropriate structure for it.
- f) The change resulting from the County Council elections has put those developments on hold for a short period.

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**6) COASTAL CENTRE**

- a) An early, and extremely welcome, announcement from the new political leadership was the withdrawal of the for sale notices from all the Island's public buildings not currently in the process of being sold, including the Coastal Centre.
- b) It was soon clear that discussions would be available to the Town Council to explore the possibility and terms for the Town Council's management of the Centre in the interests of the town.
- c) A date for those discussions to start has now been arranged and the Town Clerk and Deputy Mayor will meet with Director of Economy and Environment Stuart Love, Deputy Director Economy and Environment John Metcalfe and Cabinet Member for Resources John Gilbey at 1pm on 16 July at County Hall.

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**7) RECOMMENDATION**

Members are recommended to consider the information provided above and give the Working Group further guidance in respect of any of these matters as appropriate.

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