



VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

CLERK'S COLUMN

EDITION 94

MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2022

Welcome to edition 94 of our Clerk's Column circulated as usual to the 490 residents on our Residents' Forum email list and through the Chronicle's page 4.

TIME TO BE HEARD

Many residents of our Town Centre and Upper Ventnor will be driven further, deeper into poverty this year – and its time the Town, the Isle of Wight Council and Island residents heard from them *directly*.

The Town Council has been developing a project to make that possible, named **Family Voice**. Ventnor – and the Island – has many voluntary organisations supporting residents without enough money, food, clothing or heating. But there is no substitute for an opportunity to tell it like it is for them – it's their own voice that will speak loudest, as has been proven in other places.

The government's Index of Deprivation has revealed that among the 32,844 small areas into which it divides the country both Upper Ventnor and Central Ventnor are within the most deprived 20%. The town's central area (home for 1,483 people) ranks in the most deprived 2,000 areas nationally on both Employment and Environment. Upper Ventnor (also 1,483 residents) ranks among the 3,000 most deprived on Children in Poverty and Education. Both areas are around the 5,000 most deprived for Income.

Now, from 1 April, their energy bills will increase by some 50%, Inflation to 7% and National Insurance up by 10% while the impact of Covid is proven to have been significantly greater on the poorest.

The Family Voice project:

Ventnor resident (and Town Councillor 2009-2013) David George is a professional documentary maker. He will, in complete confidence, record the voices of residents at the sharp end of all this at a place of their choosing in sound only. He will then weave extracts from the recordings into a single telling of their experiences and hopes. All contributions will be anonymous.

So, if you depend on Universal Credit, Disability Benefit, Unemployment Benefit, Council Tax Reduction or the Minimum wage or less please phone David on 852540 for a confidential discussion.

HIGH STREET CLOSURE MEETING

The consultation meeting on the 3-week closure of the High Street we'd asked Wightfibre for took place at St Catherine's Church on Monday attended by around 25 people including a number of business owners. Two senior Wightfibre Directors were there and a full presentation including samples of materials used prompted a lively Q&A session. The meeting heard that a specialist company had been engaged to lift and replace the blocks that form the pavements and that although the area will be closed to vehicles throughout, pedestrian access will be maintained. Arrangements for deliveries will be made.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

The Group met virtually on Thursday evening. Tony McCarthy's monthly report was received and discussed covering the continued growth in the use of our Green Room for advice services and meetings, our Wellbeing Café as well as excellent developments by the Foodbank, our Youth Club and the Carnival Committee. Our plans for the deployment of the Housing Support Fund grant we've received from the Isle of Wight Council were discussed and that widened into a discussion of the challenges many residents will face from the increases in energy charges and food costs.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

A one-item Agenda item for its meeting on Tuesday was the application for change of use for Belgrave Road's St Andrew's Hotel. It resolved to strongly oppose the application, finding: 'Serious concerns are raised regarding parking and without a statement from Island Roads, regarding the permissible number of parking spaces, it is felt that the proposal cannot be approved.'

RRECRUITING BEACH SAFETY WORKERS

We're advertising for two 21 hour a week staff to join our Beach Safety team 1 June – 30 September. Details [here](#).

VIA MY TWITTER FEED LAST WEEK

- [IPPR's Press Release](#) on today's energy price increases: 'Energy bills for those on the lowest incomes could rise 7.5 times faster than those on highest incomes and single parents will see their bills rise 56 per cent faster than the national average.'
- [Joseph Rowntree Foundation's](#) look at today's new measures finds eg 'Single adult households on low incomes will spend a shocking 43% on average of their income after housing costs on energy bills.'

MORE INFORMATION: is available from the Town Council's website and @ventnor clerk