



# MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

GREEN ROOM, SALISBURY GARDENS

7PM

20 FEBRUARY 2024

Members present:-

Councillors: Steve Cooper (Chair), Mark Jefferies, Phil Warren, Ian Bond, Steph Toogood, James Toogood, Steve Milford, Julie Hutchison, Cassie Bailey & Dave Logan.

## MINUTE SUBJECT

### PUBLIC FORUM

Nine members of the public were present; one requested for the meeting to be recorded, with no objections received from Councillors or remaining public.

Questions were raised regarding the Medical Centre – how people are treated and handled locally.

Mayor Steve Cooper has requested a meeting with GPs – as yet no response has been received. He will continue to pursue this request but stressed that this is not an issue for the Town Council.

Concerns were raised re Leeson Road closure after the recent landslip at Bonchurch, and the lack of available public transport, with the No:3 Southern Vectis bus currently diverted into Ventnor via Wroxall.

Local residents and especially the elderly are feeling isolated, with a 15-minute walk to the shops, returning with heavy shopping bags.

Councillor Steve Milford addressed the meeting, commenting that the No:31 Bus runs part-way along Leeson Road, to Bonchurch Shute, but currently only on 2 days per week (Tuesdays and Fridays) and the Town Council subsidise this service.

Negotiations are ongoing with the operator, Top Taxis to increase the service's frequency (ie., more than 2 days per week) with the suggestion that the 31 Bus could operate on Saturdays.

Councillor Jim Toogood stated that better signage on the bus is essential and that residents should "use it or lose it" – a push to encourage usage of the service.

### 01/24 PRESENTATION BY THE FOOTPRINT TRUST

Mayor Steve Cooper welcomed Steve Howes of the Footprint Trust to the meeting.

Steve Howes opened his presentation, stating that fuel poverty is on the increase Island-wide, with the Trust assessing residents' requirements to establish if they qualify for assistance via grants - if a resident is receiving benefits, there's a wide range of services available to them.

The Trust assist to reduce residents' utility bills, installation of solar panels, cheaper utilities, etc., dependent upon individual circumstances.

With an increase in mental health problems, more people are in debt than the previous year - people cannot afford the rising utility bills - more residents are attending Foodbank, BabyBox, Pantry, etc.

Currently assisting 94 households in Ventnor, the Trust assisted 207 people in the last year, with an average of £330 per year saved after advice was provided; 49% of residents received more cost-effective appliances with the help of the Trust, saving energy.

Mayor Steve Cooper asked about households that fall outside of the general criteria; the Trust will assess those homes, providing advice on suitable heating systems, energy usage, insulation etc.

### 02/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillor John Watkins.

#### 03/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest received from Councillor Steve Milford as Trustee for BabyBox, Foodbank and Pantry.

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#### 04/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 11 December 2023, having been previously circulated to Members were taken as read.

**It was proposed by Councillor Jim Toogood, seconded by Councillor Steve Milford and unanimously resolved to:-**

accept the Minutes of Town Council meeting of 11 December 2023.

The Minutes of the:-

- HR Committee Meeting 11 December 2023
- HR Committee Meeting 22 January 2024
- Planning Committee Meeting 2 January 2024
- Planning Committee Meeting 6 February 2024

are for information only.

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#### 04A/24 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Councillor Ian Bond commented that the current Code was over ten years old, and that the proposed Code – reflecting the national NALC model – is more comprehensive. Cllr Bond highlighted that the proposal would require members to make an additional declaration of their interests, relating to directorships and memberships.

**It was proposed by Councillor Mark Jefferies, seconded by Councillor Ian Bond and unanimously resolved to:-**

adopt the Members' Code of Conduct.

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#### 04B/24 EMPLOYEES' CODE OF CONDUCT

Councillor Ian Bond commented that the Council doesn't currently have an Employee Code of Conduct, and that the proposal is again based on the NALC model. Cllr Bond suggested that the HR Committee reviews how it is communicated to staff and highlighted the need for staff and councillors to maintain professional relationships, to avoid any conflict of interest.

Mayor Steve Cooper commented that he and Cllr Bond serve on the HR Committee and new or revised policies have to be communicated to all Councillors.

The NALC Civility and Respect Pledge – for both Councillors and Staff to sign up to - is an Appendix included in both the Members' Code of Conduct and Employees' Code of Conduct.

**It was proposed by Councillor Ian Bond, seconded by Councillor Steve Milford and unanimously resolved to:-**

adopt the Employees' Code of Conduct.

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#### 04c/24 SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS

Councillor Ian Bond said that having a proper Scheme of Delegations was important for any council, and this was another gap that Ventnor Town Council needed to fill.

Cllr Bond proposed as an amendment to add an additional paragraph into section 3.3, to read: "Authority to settle invoices is only delegated where the purchase or works have been authorised in advance by the full Council, an appropriate Committee, the Town Clerk, or another appropriately empowered member of the Council staff". He said that this would be a safeguard to ensure that public money is only spent where the Council has properly authorised it in advance. This amendment was agreed.

**It was proposed by Councillor Jim Toogood, seconded by Councillor Phil Warren and unanimously resolved to:-**

adopt the Scheme of Delegations policy.

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#### 04d/24 SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

This policy - agreed by the HR Committee - fills another identified gap for Ventnor Town Council. The policy sets out how the Council will manage both long term and recurrent short term sick absence, based on best practice from other town councils.

The content of this document was noted – for information only.

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#### 05/24 FINANCE REPORT

The Finance Report for this meeting 1/24, had been previously circulated to Members and included information on bank balances at 31 December 2023 and 31 January 2024, with a list of all payments made during these two months.

Councillor Ian Bond said that despite the favourable variance on staff costs, the Council was significantly overspent for the current year, and noted that a significant part of this arises because the Beach Safety Team had been employed for considerably longer than the Council agreed.

**It was proposed by Councillor Steve Milford, seconded by Councillor Steph Toogood and unanimously resolved to:-**

accept the Finance Report.

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#### 06/24 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2024/25

Report 2/24 from the Responsible Finance Officer – previously circulated to Members, provides details about budget forecast for the current financial year and a draft Budget for 2024/25 including the Precept required to fund it.

Councillor Ian Bond welcomed the suggested increase of 11.2% in Council Tax being less than the figure considered back in December. Cllr Bond proposed that the increase could be reduced towards 9% if a saving from the Assistant Town Clerk's position being vacant were budgeted for the first three months of the financial year, with part of this used to fund the proposals for CCTV at the Esplanade toilets and for Lifeguard training. These changes were agreed.

Mayor Steve Cooper asked about the additional £10k for electrical works at Ventnor Park. Cllr Jim Toogood advised the meeting that new electrics and cabling is required and essential for safety of the electrics.

IT and Ventnor Library were under-budgeted last year.

The Council is overspent by £3k on Boniface Fields.

Councillor Dave Logan asked if it is worth factoring an amount into the budget for the No:31 Bus service; the Mayor responded that it is difficult to budget for any additional cost until the outlook for re-opening Leeson Road, and the details of the possible grant from the Isle of Wight Council are known.

Councillor Steve Milford advised the meeting that a £10k grant as a one-off amount might be available from the Isle of Wight Council.

**It was proposed by Councillor Jim Toogood, seconded by Councillor Mark Jefferies and unanimously resolved that the Town Council:**

- adopt the tabled budget as amended.
  - confirm its Precept-related Budget for 2024/25 to be £475,717 and authorise the Responsible Finance Officer and Town Clerk to inform the Isle of Wight Council accordingly.
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#### 07/24 MANAGEMENT OF FINANCIAL RISK

The basis for the annual review of the Financial Risk Assessment by the Town Council was set out in Report 3/24 for this meeting.

The current arrangements for the management of financial risks had been previously circulated to Members in advance of the meeting for comment and amendment.

Mayor Steve Cooper asked Councillors to consider that – with climate change, land instability in Ventnor and the building requiring ongoing maintenance – Salisbury Gardens be listed in the risk assessment and decide if it should be a medium or high-risk item; Councillors Phil Warren, Mark Jefferies and Steve Milford concurred, with Cllr Milford suggesting that future significant landslips in Ventnor should be recognised as a significant risk.

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**It was proposed by Councillor Phil Warren, seconded by Councillor Steve Milford and unanimously resolved that:**

with the addition of Salisbury Gardens listed as high-risk, the Town Council approves and adopts the circulated list of arrangements for the management of financial risk.

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**08/24 GREEN ROOM ENTRANCE & LIFEGUARD HUT: LOCKS**

Replacement locks are required on the entrances to the Green Room at Salisbury Gardens and also the Lifeguard hut.

Councillor Ian Bond asked that, as good practice, proposals for additional expenditure should show which budget it will come from, and whether or not it can be afforded within the existing budget.

The Town Council is recommended to approve the quotation from Chant Lock for the total amount of £435.08 + VAT to carry out this work, previously attached to Report 4/24 and circulated to Members.

**It was proposed by Councillor Dave Logan, seconded by Councillor Steph Toogood, and unanimously resolved that:**

the Town Council ask its Acting Town Clerk to instruct Chant Lock to proceed with the replacement locks on both buildings.

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**09/24 LIFEGUARD COURSE**

As detailed in Report 5/24 previously circulated to members, Ventnor Town Council's two Beach Safety Workers have expressed a desire to undertake a Lifeguard Course.

The Town Council is recommended to approve the total cost of £280 per candidate (a total cost of £560) for these employees to undertake the 5-day course – in their own time, to be held in Ryde - provided that both staff members remain in the Town Council's employment for at least two years (2024 and 2025).

Should either employee resign within the two years, the cost of their course will be borne by them.

Mayor Steve Cooper welcomes the opportunity for staff training saying that this is about investing in our employees and a lifeguarded-protected beach will attract more visitors and users of the beach.

Councillor Steph Toogood outlined the benefits that having trained Lifeguards could be great publicity for Ventnor and enhances the safety aspect of Ventnor beach.

**It was proposed by Councillor Jim Toogood, seconded by Councillor Phil Warren and unanimously resolved that:**

the Town Council authorises its Acting Town Clerk to pay the course fee of £560 (total) and progress the applications with the staff members.

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**10/24 SPRING HILL GARDENS**

As detailed in Report 6/24 previously circulated to members, Ventnor Town Council's Assets and Services Group received two quotes; Dixcey Landscapes for the amount of £1,140 and Lee Garden Services for the amount of £1,520, for replanting of Spring Hill Gardens after recent vandalism.

Councillor Jim Toogood confirmed that the water fountain has been fixed and since CCTV was installed on site, there's been no further accounts of vandalism.

**It was proposed by Councillor Jim Toogood, seconded by Councillor Cassie Bailey and unanimously resolved that:**

with a recommendation from the Assets and Services Working Group, the Town Council is requested to approve the quote from Dixcey Landscapes for the amount of £1,140 plus VAT for replanting and authorise its Acting Town Clerk to proceed.

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**11/24 CCTV: ESPLANADE TOILETS**

Due to ongoing vandalism at the Esplanade toilets - as detailed in Report 7/24 previously circulated to members - three proposals have been received by the Council's Assets and Services Working Group for installation of CCTV at the toilets.

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Councillor Ian Bond said that he welcomed CCTV to deter vandalism but expressed concern that the Council had not implemented it in the appropriate way. Cllr Bond said that the Council must have a published policy for how its CCTV would be used and welcomed the proposal to produce one and agree it at the April meeting.

The total cost of installation to include a contingency of additional electrical work is approximately £2,200, with the Assets and Services Working Group recommending Lifeline Alarm Systems Ltd.

- Members should note that costs associated with the installation of CCTV are allowed for within the draft budget 2024/25.

Members are recommended to approve, in principle, the installation of CCTV at the Esplanade toilets, after public consultation.

Members are recommended to authorise its Acting Town Clerk to arrange consultation prior to its 8 April meeting, at which responses will be reported, for a decision at this meeting.

Members are recommended to develop a suitable policy and procedures at its 8 April meeting.

**It was proposed by Councillor Ian Bond, seconded by Councillor Steph Toogood and unanimously resolved to:**

- authorise its Acting Town Clerk to arrange public consultation.
  - agree in principle for installation of CCTV by preferred supplier Lifeline Alarm Systems Ltd at an approximate cost of £2,200.
  - develop a suitable policy and procedures to be agreed at its 8 April meeting.
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## 12/24 FREQUENCY OF TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

At its August 2023 meeting, the Town Council agreed to trial bi-monthly meetings for six months, reviewable at its meeting of 12 February 2024.

Councillors Mark Jefferies and Steve Milford expressed support for continuing bi-monthly meetings, with comments that this timetable provides for a full Agenda and good public attendance.

Councillor Jim Toogood said that, should the Town Council need to hold a more urgent meeting, they still may do so by way of convening an Extraordinary Meeting.

Councillor Ian Bond suggested that - with the full Council meeting less frequently - members might usefully review its committees and working parties, to make sure that decisions can properly and openly be made in between Council meetings when necessary.

To continue holding bi-monthly meetings, Members are asked to approve the following dates, and to include the Annual Town Council and Annual Town Meeting in its meetings schedule for 2024:-

8 April

20 May (Annual Town Council and Annual Town Meeting)

10 June

12 August

14 October

9 December

**It was proposed by Councillor Jim Toogood, seconded by Councillor Phil Warren and unanimously resolved to:**

continue with bi-monthly meetings for 2024, reviewable at its meeting of 10 February 2025.

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## 13/24 No: 31 Bus

Members were updated in previously circulated Report 9/24 with details of how the No:31 Bus service could be extended – funded by a grant for one year from the Isle of Wight Council - following the Bonchurch landslip and subsequent closure of Leeson Road at Bonchurch Shute.

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Discussions with the operator Top Taxis are ongoing; this item is for information only, not currently requiring a Town Council decision.

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**14/24 APPOINTMENT OF IWALC REPRESENTATIVE**

As detailed in Report 10/24, there is a vacancy for a Deputy Ventnor Town Council Representative for IWALC.

As Councillors Steph Toogood and Mark Jefferies have both expressed an interest in fulfilling this role for the Town Council, Mayor Steve Cooper addressed the meeting, saying that Councillors had the choice of deferring this item until the Annual Town Council meeting in May, or go straight to a vote at tonight's meeting.

- Councillor Mark Jefferies was proposed by Councillor Dave Logan
- Councillor Steph Toogood was proposed by Councillor Jim Toogood

**With a majority vote, Cllr Steph Toogood is the appointed Deputy Ventnor Town Council's Representative for IWALC for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.**

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**15/24 SHORE ROAD CAR PARK - SIGNAGE**

As detailed in Report 11/24, the Town Council manage Shore Road car park and new signage is required as per images attached to the report.

The Town Council is recommended to approve installation of the three signs, at a total cost of £138.00 plus VAT.

Councillor Mark Jefferies commented that he is in discussions with Island Roads to provide directional signage to the Esplanade from Albert Street.

**It was proposed by Councillor Jim Toogood, seconded by Councillor Phil Warren and unanimously resolved to:**

authorise its Acting Town Clerk to instruct Signpost Express to proceed with the signage for Shore Road car park.

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**16/24 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Town Clerk's Report 12/24 – recorded recent activity which did not require Town Council decisions at this time.

It included a report on Ventnor Day 2024, Ventnor Carnival, Our Place – Community Action Health Roadshow, the Wellbeing Café, Ventnor Cricket Club, MacNaughton-Howe Festival and Dentaid.

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The meeting closed at 9:20pm

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR

DATE

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