



MINUTES OF VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

GREEN ROOM, SALISBURY GARDENS

7PM

9 FEBRUARY 2026

DRAFT

Members present:-

Councillors: Steph Toogood (Chair), Ian Bond, Brayden Gibbins, Karl Hunter, Steve Milford, Ernie Polak-Harvey, James Toogood, & John Watkins.

Clerk: Morgan Williams

MINUTE SUBJECT

01/26 PUBLIC FORUM

There were 8 members of public present.

County Councillor Ed Blake provided a brief update regarding pressing issues around town. The Bath Road court case pre-hearing was held, with a decision date in August. The Isle of Wight Council are hoping for temporary fix by August, although there are ongoing concerns about some parts of the road. The road through Wroxall was due to be reopened early thanks to conducive weather. Cllr Ed Blake also noted his support of the Expression of Interest regarding the UK Town of Culture entry, hoping that the piece is well constructed and successful.

Local resident Cliff Kane raised the issue of dog mess which seems prevalent in town at the moment. He asked whether there is anything that can be done about it. The Chair stated that unfortunately there is very little we can do as a town council – even with a warden it's difficult and costly to police/enforce, but that the Council would be willing to discuss options further in the future.

Another member of public shared the view that dog mess was a big problem in town, having to walk in the road with 4-post walker difficult to avoid the dog mess.

Maggie Nelmes asked if VTC are willing and able to support Tree Wardens. Cllr Ernie Polak-Harvey agreed to follow up directly with her.

02/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Steve Cooper, Linda Jefferies & Mark Jefferies.

03/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest were received from Steve Milford regarding agenda item 15, as he is a trustee of Baby Box who operate from the building.

04/26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 8 December 2025 - having been previously circulated to Members - were taken as read.

It was unanimously resolved to:

accept the Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 8 December 2025.

Minutes of the Business & Community Committee of 14th January 2026, and the Planning Committee of 15th January 2026 were provided for information only.

05/26 UK TOWN OF CULTURE COMPETITION

Members agreed to discuss this agenda item next. Jack Whitewood, of Ventnor Exchange was invited to give a presentation about their upcoming application to the UK Town of Culture Competition – which requires the support of the local Council.

The inaugural competition was launched, based on the “City of Culture” programme. Any town can enter, the eventual aim being to produce a 6-month celebration of the winning town in 2028 to celebrate the role of towns across the country. Ventnor Exchange are very keen to enter this

competition on behalf of Ventnor. The winning town would receive a £3m investment. Jack noted that it would be very competitive with slim odds, but very well worth submitting an Expression of Interest, noting that some other local towns have also registered their interests in entering the competition. There must be a key delivery body which he stated would be Ventnor Exchange, to be supported by the local council. There is no financial commitment required from the Council, but Jack was keen for the Council, to engage with the process which will also entail significant public engagement. At this stage, he was requesting the initial endorsement of the process and the idea with the key element being the story of the town. Jack also noted that it would be worth considering, at least as a mental exercise, what improvements Ventnor may see from such a significant investment.

Cllr Ernie Polak-Harvey asked about the timeline. It was clarified that this first stage where towns can express an interest in applying runs until end of March, long listed towns would then have 6 months to complete a full application. The winner would be revealed in January 2027. It would then be in 2028 to deliver the 6 months of celebratory activity.

Cllr Ian Bond moved the motion tabled in his name, which was seconded by Cllr Steve Milford, and unanimously agreed as follows:

The Council notes the Department of Culture, Media & Sport's announcement of a 'UK Town of Culture 2028 competition', with a 31 March 2026 deadline for Expressions of Interest, that Ventnor is eligible to enter under the 'small town' (population under 20,000) category, and that the Ventnor Exchange is proposing to assemble a bid from the town.

The Government's Expert Advisory Panel, chaired by Phil Redmond, will assess applications against three criteria:

- Your story – the unique story and identity of the town;
- Culture for everyone – how an inclusive cultural programme will be designed;
- Making it happen – how the programme will be delivered.

The winning town, to be decided by the Secretary of State in early 2027, will receive £3 million to deliver a cultural programme of around six months in 2028, with two further awards of £250,000 for the other finalists. Those towns that are shortlisted will receive £60,000 to support development of a full bid.

Accordingly, the Council resolves:

- to support, in principle, an Expression of Interest for Ventnor to participate in the UK Town of Culture competition;
- that the bid will require a partnership to be put together for the bid project, involving the Council, local cultural organisations and the community, and delegates to its Policy & Resources Committee responsibility for agreeing an appropriate governance structure to engage with such a partnership;
- that Ventnor Exchange will be the appropriate partner to assemble and lead the partnership and act as "Delivery Body" for the bid, with most likely the IOWC required to fulfil the role of "Accountable Body", should the bid succeed;
- to receive a further report at its April meeting, and notes:
- the need for early discussion with the IOWC for their officer input, should the partnership agree to proceed;
- that there are no financial implications for the Council at this stage.

06/26 FINANCE REPORT

The report provided members with information about year-to-date expenditure against the budget heads as well as a commentary about the likely year-end position of the Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Steve Milford, seconded by Cllr James Toogood and unanimously resolved to:

accept the Finance Report

07/26 BUDGET DECISIONS REPORT

The report provided members with information regarding changes to services needed to fit with the draft budget for 2026/27. The two areas affected were Beach Safety and Car Parking charges.

Members suggested that as well as the increase in tariff charges, the cost of parking permits should be increased by a similar percentage, thus making 12-month permits £160 and 6-month permits £85.

It was proposed by Cllr Ernie Polak-Harvey, seconded by Cllr Ian Bond, and unanimously resolved to:

- Reduce Beach Safety provision to 8 weeks through the summer; and
 - Increase car parking charges as discussed including increasing the permit cost.
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08/26 BUDGET 2026/27

The report provided Members with information regarding setting the budget for 2026/27. The Band D percentage increase being 8.77% as per the draft budget tabled. This had been reduced significantly from earlier drafts discussed at informal budget meetings.

One of the more significant considerations was the provision for staff salary increases. The Unions' initial pay demand was for 10%, and the Budget allowed for 7.5%. Cllr Ian Bond noted that the Clerk was right that with very limited reserves, even though an increase as high as 7.5% is unlikely, it would not be sensible for the Council to risk failing to have funds budgeted to pay the staff. Assuming the actual Pay Award is lower than 7.5%, he hoped that the provision would mean re-establishing some reserves in the coming year. Cllr Bond also noted that the council is responsible for maintenance of a number of properties, with no specific "sinking fund" budget provision and limited reserves. Hoping that the pay rise is lower than 7.5%, he suggested that the Council can start putting funds aside, particularly towards long-term maintenance of properties.

It was proposed by Cllr Steve Milford, seconded by Cllr Ian Bond, and unanimously resolved to:

Accept the budget as presented, with a precept requirement of £655,454 and authorise the Clerk to notify the Isle of Wight Council accordingly.

09/26 APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

The report provided members with information regarding the appointment of an internal auditor for 2025/26.

It was proposed by Cllr Karl Hunter, seconded by Cllr James Toogood, and unanimously resolved to:

Appoint Mrs Maxine Warr as Ventnor Town Council's Internal Auditor for the 2025/26 financial year having considered her competency and independence.

10/26 CHANGE OF DATE FOR APRIL 2026 TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Members are asked to agree to a change of date to the April 2026 Town Council Meeting, from 13th April to 20th April.

It was proposed by Cllr Ian Bond, seconded by Cllr Ernie Polak-Harvey and unanimously agreed to

Hold the next Town Council meeting on 20th April instead of 13th April 2026.

11/26 VENTNOR COMMUNITY ORCHARD LICENCE

The paper introduced the situation whereby although the first orchard trees were planted some time ago, the Town Council held no formal Licence for this use of the land. The Isle of Wight Council had prepared the Heads of Terms for such a licence now, for a 6-year term.

It was proposed by Cllr Steve Milford, seconded by Cllr James Toogood, and unanimously agreed to

Approve the Heads of Terms of the Licence for the Community Orchard site, subject to satisfactory agreement that the trees already existing on the site remained the financial responsibility of the Isle of Wight Council.

12/26 BARNARDO'S FAMILY CENTRES PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT REVIEW

The Clerk requested that this item be withdrawn from the Full Council meeting as it falls within delegated authority and no decision is required at this time. The Clerk had circulated the partnership agreement to members in advance of the meeting in case they wished to discuss the item. The Chair checked with Members that they were content to accept the withdrawal.

The item was withdrawn, and dealt with under delegated authority

13/26 DOG POO POSTER COMPETITION

The Business & Voluntary Sector Officer introduced the initiative, stating that the previous poster produced in the last competition was designed by someone who was 9 years old at the time, but now 15. It would be great to start again, noting that there isn't budget for anything bigger but that this provides a good opportunity to get kids involved and generate publicity that dog owners need to be responsible. The Business & Voluntary Sector Officer said that she would agree to donate an Amazon voucher for the winner of the competition.

The chair asked for clarity that the competition would be open to home-schooled children as well as those in school – which was confirmed by the Business & Voluntary Sector Officer. It was discussed that the competition could run until the Easter holiday.

It was proposed by Cllr Ernie Polak-Harvey, seconded by Cllr Karl Hunter, and unanimously agreed to

Approve the initiative, and delegate the running of the competition to the Clerk and Business & Community Committee

14/26 LEESON ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER

The Clerk introduced the item, following Island Roads' invitation to comment on the proposal to introduce No Waiting/No Loading restrictions along both sides of Leeson Road near Smugglers Haven.

Cllr Karl Hunter noted that he was not aware of traffic flow being an issue in recent times. He suggested that there was a danger of over-governance and intervention when it is not essential. If it were for environmental reasons such as landslip then it may be better justified, but this doesn't seem to be. Without any evidence of a safety concern it would be difficult to support the proposal.

Members agreed that the occupiers of the two houses on the North side of the road with no off-street parking would be affected, as this proposal would deprive the residents of nearby parking.

It was proposed by Cllr Karl Hunter, seconded by Cllr Ian Bond, and unanimously agreed to:

Instruct the clerk to write to Island Roads in opposition to the proposal.

15/26 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

In view of the confidential nature of the following items:

Ventnor Central / Former Youth Centre.

It was resolved under the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings (1960) Act:

To exclude the Public and Press whilst the next items are under discussion as they are of a confidential nature.

The meeting closed at 8:18pm

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR

DATE

DRAFT