

MINUTES OF THE VENTNOR TOWN ANNUAL MEETING

ST CATHERINE'S CHURCH

6.00PM

21 MAY 2026

ITEM SUBJECT

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Cllr James Toogood.

2) MAYOR'S REPORT ON 2018/19

The Mayor opened the meeting, with 52 residents present.

Amongst other projects, the town council manages Ventnor Park and its outdoor gym "OutFit", the Esplanade's Paddling Pool, Boniface Fields allotments – with Ventnor Shed located on the same site, Salisbury Gardens and the Green Room, Beach Safety, Public toilets, Wellbeing Café, Playgroup - which takes place at Ventnor Children's Centre on Albert Street -Thursday Kitchen together with Really Useful Thursdays operating from St Catherine's Church every Thursday, BabyBox, Community Pantry and Foodbank, Ventnor Library and the No:31 Bus.

- The Esplanade toilets have undergone recent refurbishment; all doors and frames have been repainted, together with the exterior railings. The major roof repairs are provisionally set for the autumn. The urinals are to be replaced as soon as possible, and this essential facility will not be fully closed whilst works take place.
- The town council has successfully negotiated a new agreement with the Isle of Wight Council for Ventnor Library, reducing the town council's costs by £6k – the town council pay the salary of one member of Library staff.
- The town council renewed the contract for the No:31 Bus with the current contractor and the service has now moved from operating on Saturdays to Thursdays. The application of a new grant from 1 July 2026 provides funding for the additional running day and its associated costs, covering the years 2026-27 and 2028.29.
- Aside from its use by the Wellbeing Café', the Green Room continues to be well used by many community groups and organisations.
- The town council offers support-in-kind – equivalent to financial support, but time in kind – to local community groups.

The town council must continue to spend money wisely; the wheels of local government are slow but progressive.

3) REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

a) Cllr Ed Blake – County Councillor for Ventnor West:

Cllr Ed Blake thanked the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for their service over the past year. An update on the Winter Gardens is expected at the end of May. Progress on Bath Road works is anticipated within the next few months, while Southgrove Road improvements will continue over the next six months. Members noted the high number of planned and emergency road closures. The upcoming Isle of Wight Council AGM will consider a political party merger and discuss the Island Roads contract and ferry services.

b) Cllr Mark Jefferies – County Councillor for Ventnor East, Bonchurch, Lowtherville & Wroxall:

Cllr Jefferies, a Ventnor Town Councillor since 2021 and Chair of the Environment & Transport Committee, is addressing abandoned vehicles in Upper Ventnor and progressing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in Bonchurch and Wroxall.

c) Police: PCSO Pete Downing

PCSO Downing reported on problem addresses in Ventnor tending to attract disrepute – with the shut-down of three properties – working with housing managers to move people along.

d) *Ventnor Cricket Club:*

Ventnor Cricket Club marked its 175th anniversary last year with a Lashings World XI event attended by 1,000 people. The club has also hosted popular initiatives including walking cricket, disability cricket and grant-funded pickleball. Its hall is available as a community sports venue, and the club encourages greater use by local residents.

e) *Ventnor Carnival: Teresa Preston*

The Ventnor community continues to strongly support the Carnival through donations and other assistance. The Carnival now uses 12 High Street as its hub, which requires renovation. Fundraising efforts this year include a pop-up variety show and a pumpkin workshop, and the Carnival acknowledges the Town Council's support in kind. The train float has also been loaned to the Three Rivers Festival.

f) *Ventnor Family Playgroup:*

On behalf of Eloise, Teresa Preston provided a short report.

The Playgroup saw 40+ families coming through their doors last year, generally 4-5 families per session. Monday is the busiest day and the half-term sessions are working well.

g) *Ventnor Wellbeing Café:*

Terri Exposit, the Town Council's Wellbeing Café Co-ordinator, reported that the Café has grown significantly since 2020, expanding from a small group in the Green Room to a thriving community space operating four days a week. Open to all, it has helped form many friendships and is supported by a dedicated group of members, several of whom attended the meeting.

h) *Ventnor Youth Club:*

Jordan Royle, the Town Council's Youth Opportunities Officer, reported on a successful year at Ventnor Youth Club, delivering badminton, basketball, drop-in sessions and dance classes led by a qualified instructor.

The Youth Club continues to signpost young people and families to available support services. This included hosting Kooth, a free, BACP-accredited mental health service for young people aged 10+, which provides access to trained counsellors and support such as CBT sessions, helping young people access support more quickly and reducing reliance on lengthy referral processes.

A former Youth Club member recently returned during a busy GCSE exam period to catch up with staff and discuss her studies, work and future plans. Her visit highlighted the positive impact the Youth Club had on her development and demonstrated the lasting relationships and trust built between young people and staff.

Jordan is also involved in a multi-agency youth working group that aims to strengthen support for young people across the Island. The group organised the successful "Together for Children" conference, bringing together professionals from youth and children's services to share ideas, collaborate and develop networks. Due to positive feedback, the event will be repeated on 2 June.

The group also delivered a "Youth Voice" event, attended by approximately 80 young people aged 10 to 25, to gather views on key issues affecting them. Feedback was compiled into topic-specific infographics, and work is ongoing to develop an action plan based on the findings.

i) *Baby Box, Pantry & Foodbank:*

Joyce Milford, Trustee of Baby Box, reported that the charity continues to make a significant difference across the Island, supporting more than 10,300 individuals with strong community backing. Through the Food Bank, 479 adults and 381 children have been assisted, and thanks were extended to the Town Council for its support. Joyce also reported that Baby Box is close to finalising an agreement with the Isle of Wight Council for new premises.

j) *Ventnor Enhancement Fund:*

Graham Middleton, Chair of the Ventnor Enhancement Fund, reported that the group maintains and waters flower containers at Central Car Park, supports environmental projects such as pond clearance at Flowersbrook, and raises funds through events including a duck race. The group has also provided signage for Stokey's Solar Systems Walk, refurbished the telephone box near St Catherine's Church as a community asset, and is working with Ventnor Fringe on a related event. In partnership with the Town Council, they are also helping to renovate the lighting at the Cascade.

k) *Ventnor Friends of Wight Horticulture:*

Since consolidating in 2025, the group has expanded its horticultural support across the Island and thanked the Town Council for its continued support. Current projects include planting schemes at Earl Mountbatten Hospice to enhance the environment for patients and visitors, and a children's initiative at Boniface Fields allotments. They have also suggested planting a quince tree at the Community Orchard on Steephill Down Road.

The group organises trips, events and talks, welcomes new members, and is seeking an additional committee member. This year, it awarded three horticultural training bursaries, including one recipient progressing to an RHS course.

l) *Ventnor Community Shed:*

Ventnor Community Shed currently has 35 members and provides a well-equipped workshop for individual and collaborative projects. The group has produced memorial benches for the Cricket Club and numerous benches for the Town Council, as well as planters and garden gates. Members also sell wood-turned items at local events such as the Ventnor Summer Festival and have supported Children's Services by raising beds at Boniface Fields. The Shed meets every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 2pm and welcomes visitors interested in learning new skills.

m) *Ventnor & District Local Heritage Society:*

Growing interest in the Heritage Society's archives from around the world has led to the launch of a business sponsorship scheme. However, the Society is facing a severe shortage of volunteers and urgently requires a new Treasurer. Without additional support, the Society may be forced to close in early 2027. A general meeting will be held on 29 May to explore options for securing the facility's future.

n) *Ventnor Rugby Club:*

The Club welcomed a new coach for the recent season and enjoyed a successful year, attracting new players, securing promotion to County 2, and continuing to grow. The Club is supported by several sponsors, including Red Funnel, Wight Shipyard Company, AJ Wells & Sons Ltd, and Gamson Gray Design & Media.

o) *Ventnor Bowling Club: Maurice Kane*

Founded in 1886, Ventnor is the Island's oldest bowling club and will celebrate 100 years at its Mitchell Avenue site in 2027. The mixed club currently has 76 members and remains a friendly, welcoming organisation. Recent activities have included the Armada Recalde Cup match against Cowes, held in partnership with the Town Council, and successful taster sessions with the Isorropia mental health service.

p) *Thursday Kitchen:*

Now in its fourth year, Thursday Kitchen continues to provide a welcoming and inclusive community space, attracting around 60 attendees. Monthly "Really Useful Thursdays" offer information and advice from a range of Island organisations. Over the past year, the project has served 3,500 lunches and more than 9,000 cups of tea. Sustained by donations and volunteer support, Thursday Kitchen remains a valued community initiative, with particular thanks given to Catherine Hammond and all those who contribute their time and effort.

q) *Bonchurch Community Association:*

The Association is a self-funded organisation that organises a range of community events, including Picnic on the Green and the annual Open Gardens weekend, which typically features around 16 gardens. Members also regularly maintain Bonchurch Pond and help keep the village tidy. The popular Christmas carol event by the pond attracted more than 200 attendees last year.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7:05PM

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR	DATE