



# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

GREEN ROOM, SALISBURY GARDENS

7PM

10 JUNE 2024

Members present:-

Councillors: Steve Cooper (Chair), Steph Toogood, James Toogood, John Watkins, Steve Milford, Dave Logan, Mark Jefferies, Ian Bond

Also present:- Katherine Baldwin (Clerk), Morgan Williams, Gareth Hughes

MINUTE SUBJECT

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## 36/24 PUBLIC FORUM

There was one member of the public present.

Cllr Rodney Downer gave a brief update. It was noted that when the works take place on Newport Road, the Number 3 bus will run as far as Upper Ventnor and turn at Downlands Crescent. There will be a bus taking pupils from Upper Ventnor to Wroxall School. Cllr Downer explained that he was yet to hear from Southern Vectis about other transport from Ventnor. The Transport Regulation Order is being submitted. Cllr Downer has asked if Southern Water can work longer hours to get the work done. Cllr Downer explained that shingle had been made up where it had washed away in Bonchurch. Cllr James Toogood asked who was responsible for the fence along the green in Bonchurch. Cllr Downer would speak with Island Roads and Property Services.

## 37/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Cassie Bailey and Julie Hutchison.

## 38/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest received at this time.

## 39/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Cllr Bond raised a point of accuracy in respect of the Minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Cllr Bond had given apologies for the meeting but was involved in the pre-work referenced in Minute 26/24. The Report for the item had six recommendations but the vote did not include those recommendations and there is no reference in the Minutes to the Terms of Reference. Cllr Bond suggested that the Minutes be amended to add "and their Terms of Reference" after the words "new Committee structure" to minute the council's acceptance of the proposed terms of reference by the unanimous vote to implement the new structure.

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

Accept the amendment to the Extraordinary Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The Minutes of the Annual Town Council Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024, having been previously circulated to Members were taken as read.

**It was proposed by Councillor Mark Jefferies, seconded by Councillor Steve Milford, and unanimously resolved to:**

Accept the Minutes of the Annual Town Council meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024, having been previously circulated to Members were taken as read.

**It was proposed by Councillor John Watkins and seconded by Councillor Steph Toogood to:**

Accept the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024 were noted for information.

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#### 40/24 FINANCE REPORT

The Finance Report for this meeting had been previously circulated to Members and included information on bank balances at the end of April 2024, with a list of all payments made during March and April 2024.

Gareth Hughes explained that there was no budget monitor as the May expenditure is not in yet. Gareth Hughes would circulate this to Members once it is received.

Cllr Bond noted that there will be a challenge this year. The Town Clerk position had been filled in May rather than July and there was a budgeted part-time post for the Business Development Officer role. Cllr Bond noted that there will be significant budget pressures in respect of staffing. Gareth Hughes would do a budgeting forecast for the August meeting due to the staffing issues. Cllr Cooper echoed and concurred with Cllr Bond.

There was a question from Cllr Cooper about the way in which expenses are recorded. Gareth Hughes confirmed that the expenses were accompanied by an expenses claim and were authorised.

Cllr Jefferies asked about the payment to the Footprint Trust for Warmer Projects. Gareth Hughes explained that it was a scheme providing assistance and an agreement was in place to pay an amount per annum. The Town Clerk would look into this and provide details to the Members.

Cllr Logan asked what the expenses were for in cases where there were multiple entries and why it is done that way. Gareth Hughes explained that the expenses were incurred by staff. Cllr Bond noted that expenses are usually personal expenses related to travel or accommodation but if an employee is buying for the council, that needs to be recorded for transparency. If it is food that the Council is buying then it needs to say food. Gareth Hughes explained that in the case of the Well-Being Café, Ventnor Town Council pays for the staff but purchases go through the Well-Being Café account. Cllr Cooper noted that the expenses entries were not clear and need detail for transparency. Cllr Bond noted that expenses had also been claimed on the Salisbury Gardens account. Gareth Hughes would look at a new way of reporting expenses for the August Town Council meeting. Cllr Cooper explained that it was not a criticism but it needed to be clear so that it can be properly scrutinised. Gareth Hughes could let Councillors know what was in expenses before the August meeting.

Cllr Steph Toogood questioned the payment to the church for the public meeting. Cllr Steph Toogood understood that the agreement had been for the Isle of Wight Council to pay the costs of hiring the venue. The Town Clerk would follow up on this matter.

Cllr Milford asked if the expenses should be recorded as the company or the person. Cllr Bond suggested it needed to be the company to avoid a breach of code.

**It was proposed by Councillor Mark Jefferies, seconded by Councillor Steve Milford, and resolved to:**

accept the Finance Report.

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#### 41/24 FINAL ACCOUNTS 2023-24

Gareth Hughes explained that the reserves had dropped from £66,846 to £45,079 but that this was small in comparison with the previous year. Last year the PWLB loan had come in before expending money on the public toilets. The accounts do not show a comparative figure for the previous year.

Cllr Bond noted that the reserves are insufficient. Cllr bond had expected staff vacancies to give some leeway which hasn't happened. The financial position isn't as robust as it might be.

Cllr Cooper noted that there would need to be some serious thinking and a look at expenditure to save money and increase the reserves.

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

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Approve the Income and Expenditure Account and related Balance Sheet as its Annual Account for the financial year 2023/24.

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**42/24 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The completed AGAR Annual Report of the Internal Auditor had been received from Mrs Maxine Warr who had been appointed Internal Auditor for the 2023-24 financial year. The Annual Internal Audit report was presented together with the requested report from Mrs Warr on the Council's financial processes and compliance with the requirements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

Cllr Bond noted the recommendation at the end of the report in respect of a full audit not being carried out and the recommendation for an interim audit towards the end of 2024. Cllr Bond suggested that this be decided at either the Policy and Resources Committee or a Town Council meeting. Gareth Hughes confirmed that the cost for an interim audit could be met in the current budget. Cllr Cooper suggested that the decision for an interim audit be considered at the Policy and Resources Committee. Gareth Hughes suggested early autumn for the interim audit.

Cllr Bond noted that the recommendations in respect of the website and transparency code which was for the Town Clerk to resolve. Gareth Hughes explained that the AGAR documents were on the website but not in a clear place to be identified. The location needs to be specific.

Cllr Milford suggested that the auditor is confirmed for this year and appointed for next year. Gareth Hughes noted that the appointment for next year would not need to be until February 2025. Gareth Hughes suggested that Mrs Warr could be appointed to undertake an Interim Internal Audit.

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

- i. Confirm the appointment of Maxine Warr as the Internal Auditor for the financial year 2023/24.
- ii. Accept the reports and that Mrs Warr be appointed to undertake an Interim Internal Audit during the 2024-25 financial year to review all matters raised in her report on the 2023-24 financial year.

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**43/24 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Annual Governance Statement was presented. The Town Clerk acknowledged that the website and adherence to the transparency code were being addressed as a matter of priority.

**It was proposed by Councillor Mark Jefferies, seconded by Councillor Steve Milford, and unanimously resolved to:**

Approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement as attached to report 23/24 included in the papers for this meeting and authorises the Mayor to sign the Section 1 accordingly.

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**44/24 ANNUAL ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

The Annual Accounting Statements were presented. Gareth Hughes explained that Point 8 of the statement was restated and the reason for this was that the figure submitted last year did not tally including cash held on behalf of the Community Support Fund. Cllr Cooper asked if there was a reason it was done that way. Gareth Hughes explained that the cash wasn't all Ventnor Town Council's cash and should have introduced CSF as a creditor.

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

- i) approve the Accounting Statements 2023/24 in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return attached to Report 24/24 for this meeting;
- ii) authorise its Mayor to sign Section 2 accordingly; and
- iii) ask its Town Clerk to submit the completed return together with the required additional papers in advance of the 30 June 2024 deadline.

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- iv) Approve the exercise of public rights to take place from Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June until Monday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
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#### 45/24 CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Gareth Hughes explained that this was a new requirement last year. Councillors have to declare that there are no conflicts of interest with BDO LLP.

Cllr Cooper noted that it is important to be clear and transparent. Cllr James Toogood raised the question of filling in new forms for the Register of Interests. Cllr Bond noted that this is an outstanding action. It can be raised at the Policy and Resources Committee.

Gareth Hughes noted that the assets list does not show values.

Cllr Bond asked for clarification regarding the definition of smaller authorities as mentioned on the form. Gareth Hughes explained that VTC falls under the umbrella of smaller authority which relates to all Town and Parish Councils regardless of expenditure amount.

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

To authorise the Mayor and the Clerk to sign the Conflict of Interest Statement to confirm that there are no conflicts of interest.

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#### 46/24 VENTNOR DAY

The Town Clerk explained the challenges that led to proposing a change of date for Ventnor Day. The Isle of Wight Council usually provide tables and chairs for Ventnor Day but informed VTC that they were unable to fulfil this commitment on 6<sup>th</sup> July due to the General Election. Southern Water then informed VTC and residents of the closure of the Newport Road which is not guaranteed to reopen by 6<sup>th</sup> July. The set up for Ventnor Day begins on 5<sup>th</sup> July and it would be difficult to manage this safely with the road diversions in place. The conclusion was that the event could not be held safely and the date would need to be moved. A number of dates were explored but clashed with other major events around the island. The proposed date is Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August.

Cllr Steph Toogood asked whether the format would be the same. The Town Clerk confirmed that the format would still be Ventnor Day and the event that was already taking place that day would be incorporated.

Cllr Jefferies suggested that the event could be more successful by combining it with the Children's Fayre.

Cllr Logan noted the clash with the Garlic Festival which would be taking place the next day and the Ventnor Carnival.

**It was proposed by Councillor James Toogood, seconded by Councillor Mark Jefferies, and unanimously resolved to:**

To move Ventnor Day from Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2024 to Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

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#### 47/24 APPOINTMENT TO BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

There is currently a vacancy on the Business and Community Committee and Cllr James Toogood has expressed an interest in filling the vacancy.

Cllr Bond noted that there is currently a vacancy on the Council with an Election on 4<sup>th</sup> July. Two Committee spaces would be needed for the new Councillor as all Councillors are given an opportunity to sit on two committees. Cllr Cooper acknowledged that this is a good point. Cllr Jefferies suggested waiting until the Election.

It was suggested that a vote is taken on an interim arrangement, as there is a Committee meeting on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June, which would continue until the first Town Council meeting after the Election.

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**It was proposed by Councillor Ian Bond, seconded by Councillor Dave Logan, and unanimously resolved to:**

To appoint Cllr James Toogood to the Business and Community Committee as an interim appointment expiring at the first Town Council meeting to be held after the Ventnor West Election on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

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**48/24 MOTIONS BY COUNCILLORS**

**A) No Mow May**

The Motion had been submitted by Cllr Hutchison who had given apologies for the meeting. Cllr Toogood suggested that Vets be consulted regarding No Mow May as the long grass affects animals. Cllr Jefferies noted that a positive of No Mow May is the Bumblebee coming off the endangered list. Cllr Steph Toogood noted that Cllr Hutchison should be present for any discussion. Cllr Logan questioned whether it could be done in fewer areas over a longer period.

**It was unanimously resolved to:**

Carry forward the Motion to the next Town Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

**B) CAR BOOT SALES**

The Motion had been submitted by Cllr Hutchison who had given apologies for the meeting. Cllr Cooper noted that he would oppose the motion in its present wording as it would defeat the object of free car parking. Cllr Cooper suggested there might be better locations although they may be problematic. Cllr Cooper thought it was a good idea but not the location. Cllr Watkins noted that the road situation was bad at the moment so it could exacerbate it. Cllr Steph Toogood noted that there was now Ingrams Market.

**It was resolved to;**

Ask Cllr Hutchison to give some further thought to the proposal.

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**49/24 SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS FOR 2024**

The Schedule was noted for information.

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**50/24 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

In view of the confidential nature of the following items:

**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.

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The meeting closed at 8.07 pm

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR

DATE

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