



DRAFT MINUTES OF A MEETING OF VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

GREEN ROOM, SALISBURY GARDENS

7PM

12 AUGUST 2024

Members present:-

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

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

MINUTE SUBJECT

54/24 PUBLIC FORUM

There were 5 members of the public present.

A member of the public raised the matter of dogs on beaches in relation to Cllr Ian Bond's motion regarding the Public Spaces Protection Order. The member of the public expressed that this could mean dogs being on the beach for seven months with five months free of dogs on the beach. The member of the public expressed that this cannot be allowed to happen and explained that holidays are sold with the beach advertised as dog free. The member of the public noted that there are other beaches which allow dogs such as Monks Bay. Cllr Bond responded that the motion would be discussed later in the agenda and that he had received different views including positive views on this matter.

The new Local Democracy Reporter, Rufus Pickles introduced himself.

Cllr Ed Blake gave a brief update. The first matter Cllr Blake raised was dogs on beaches. Cllr Blake noted that dog mess is one issue but there are a lot of other users of the beach who do not wish to be around dogs. Cllr Blake explained that the beaches in Cornwall are vast spaces and, in some cases, may be the only beach in the area and are heavily policed. Cllr Blake noted that Ventnor beach is only a small allowance of space. Cllr Blake noted that the contribution to the Fireworks in Carnival Week was due to be discussed later in the agenda and expressed that it would help if Ventnor Town Council could give a contribution. Cllr Blake noted that there had also been an issue around whether the fireworks could be let off from the harbour arm and he could not see a problem with this location. Cllr Blake explained that Leeson Road will potentially be closed on 9th September for a period of ten to twelve weeks to allow for the digging of boreholes. Cllr Blake explained that there is a push for this not to happen. The approximate cost for the boreholes is £300,000 with the boreholes being 85m in depth which is not deep enough to obtain data. Cllr Blake explained that data is already available and if Leeson Road is closed, there may be a point where Whitwell is the only route in and out of Ventnor as the Graben is on the move and Upper Gills Cliff Road is closed. Cllr Blake can be contacted should there be any questions about the situation with Bath Road. Cllr Steve Cooper thanked Cllr Blake for the update and noted that the matter of dogs on beaches would be fully debated later in the agenda. Cllr Cooper noted that the matter of Leeson Road is complex and the free parking arrangement for Saturdays was to aid additional pedestrian traffic. Cllr Cooper expressed that alternative routes into Ventnor need to be considered. Cllr Blake thanked Ventnor Town Council for arranging free car parking on Saturdays and noted that it was not fair to put this on Ventnor Town Council financially with Isle of Wight Council only offering one hour free parking in long stay car parks.

Andy Smith spoke in support of the agenda item relating to the memorial for Kevin Garlick. It was noted that the townspeople had raised money for the memorial and an amount of £811 had been raised.

Cllr Rodney Downer gave a brief update. Cllr Downer noted that there were a number of vehicles in upper Ventnor which had been given "no tax" stickers and this had been reported to him by Cllr Mark Jefferies. Cllr Downer highlighted that those who had worked on the Graben had received abuse while working. Cllr Downer noted that he had attended the opening of Leeson Road with Cllr Blake and had also attended Bonchurch Coffee Mornings and Bonchurch Open

Gardens. Cllr Downer noted that Japanese Knotweed had been discovered at Monks Bay and would be dealt with by Groundswells.

55/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence. However, Cllr Steve Cooper wished to note that Cllr Cassie Bailey had resigned. Cllr Steve Cooper wished to note his thanks and that of Ventnor Town Council for Cllr Cassie Bailey's input and work with Ventnor Town Council.

56/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest received at this time.

57/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 10th June 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 Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 10th June 2024.

The Minutes of the: -

- Environment and Transport Committee 10 June 2024
- Policy and Resources Committee 11 June 2024
- Business and Community Committee 12 June 2024
- Planning Committee 26 June 2024
- Buildings Maintenance Committee 3 July 2024
- Environment and Transport Committee 8 July 2024
- Business and Community Committee 8 July 2024
- Policy and Resources Committee 16 July 2024
- Extraordinary Business and Community Committee 24 July 2024
- Planning Committee 30 July 2024

are for information only. Cllr Ian Bond noted that this is the first Council meeting which has had the full set of Committee minutes on the agenda which provides the public and press with a complete paper trail of how decisions have been reached. In the past it has been difficult for the public to find out how decisions have been taken.

58/24 FINANCE REPORT

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

Gareth Hughes noted that the care would need to be taken to remain in budget without going into reserves. Gareth Hughes flagged the salaries as at the time the budget was set, it was assumed that the new Clerk would not be in place until three months into the financial year which would create a saving. However, that saving had not materialised due to the Clerk starting on 20th May. Gareth Hughes predicted a £10,000 overspend on salaries by year end. Gareth Hughes raised that the grant awarded to the Youth Service last year was a one off and not an ongoing grant. A grant was included in the budget for this year but was an aspiration and to date has not materialised. This potentially creates a £15,000 overspend by year end.

Cllr Steve Milford suggested that the car park budget line may need to be realigned. Cllr Milford noted that the budget line for the No.31 Bus included the two year grant which had been paid in

one payment so would need to last two years. Cllr Milford noted that the PWLB line showed a minus £995 and queried whether it should be a plus £995.

Gareth Hughes noted that there are variances on expenditure and income but these arise at this stage due to the way the car park money is collected. The Isle of Wight Council invoice Ventnor Town Council at year end for monies owed on the car parks which are leased. Gareth Hughes noted that this was not helpful.

Gareth Hughes noted that the PWLB is the loan that was taken out to advance money to Ventnor Tennis Club. It is a neutral cost as Ventnor Tennis Club repay the money.

Cllr Mark Jefferies queried the payment to the Rural Market Towns Group Membership. Cllr Mark Jefferies recalled that this was discussed at the former Assets and Services Working Group and it was agreed that the membership would not be renewed. The Assistant Town Clerk confirmed this was the case and would look into the matter.

Cllr Ian Bond suggested that there was work to do on the presentation of the budget and there had been discussions at the Policy and Resources Committee on this matter. Cllr Bond noted that it is so early in the year that the budget for the first three months and actual for the first three months do not tell much which is highlighted by the car parks. Cllr Bond suggested that a full year forecast would tell more than the figures on the current budget.

Cllr Steve Cooper thanked Gareth Hughes for stepping in to help.

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

accept the Finance Report.

59/24 WEBSITE REPORT

The Town Clerk explained that the purpose of the report is to update members on the website and the actions taken to rectify the issues identified in the internal audit report. The Town Clerk informed members that interim staff have been assisting with rectifying issues on the website in terms of compliance. The Town Clerk noted that this was an ongoing project and there is still a lot of work to be done. There would be a new member of staff who will be working directly on the website.

It was noted that the report is for information only.

60/24 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Cllr Steve Cooper noted that the Financial Regulations were discussed in the Policy and Resources Committee held earlier in the day and that there was only one change highlighted in red. The Town Clerk explained that the change is proposed in order to bring the Financial Regulations in line with the Scheme of Delegations which were agreed at a Town Council meeting earlier in the year. The Scheme of Delegations allows the Clerk to spend up to £1000 and the changes to the Financial Regulations incorporate this amount.

It was proposed by Councillor John Watkins, seconded by Councillor Ian Bon, and unanimously resolved to:

Approve the revised Financial Regulations as circulated.

61/24 CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERSHIP

Cllr Steve Cooper informed members that the former Business Development Officer had suggested membership of the Chamber of Commerce. Cllr Cooper asked the Chamber of Commerce for assistance with setting up the Ventnor Business Association. Cllr Cooper explained that the onus was put back onto him when he sought that assistance. Cllr Steve Cooper noted that in the current financial situation, membership was not absolutely necessary. Cllr Cooper noted that Ventnor Town Council is a member of the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils. The Town Clerk explained that she had discussed the membership with the current members of staff, and they did not engage with the membership. The Town Clerk did not think it was a beneficial membership for Ventnor Town Council. Cllr Mark Jefferies commented that if there is no benefit then why keep it. Cllr Dave Logan asked how much it cost to be a member. The Town Clerk responded that it was approximated £345.

It was proposed by Councillor Mark Jefferies, seconded by Councillor Dave Logan, and unanimously resolved to:

Cancel Ventnor Town Council's membership of the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce.

62/24 FREE CAR PARKING

Cllr Steve Cooper reminded the members that he brought this motion forward to aid the town and businesses when Leeson Road was closed. Cllr Cooper explained that the decision was taken as a Council that this was an important thing to do as a gesture to try and bring more people into the Town on Saturdays. Cllr Cooper explained that it was stipulated with the motion that when the road was reopened and operational, the charges would be reintroduced. Cllr Cooper had spoken to residents and businesses and explained that this situation cannot continue. Cllr Cooper noted that the Isle of Wight Council did not provide support in the way that Ventnor Town Council had requested. Cllr Cooper suggested that if the road is going to remain open in September, then charging would resume.

Cllr James Toogood suggested that free parking could be stopped as he had also spoken to traders who had said that business had picked up since Leeson Road was reopened.

Cllr Dave Logan asked about the effectiveness of the scheme. Cllr Cooper responded that he had been informed by businesses that there had been an increase in trade.

Cllr Cooper proposed retaining free parking until it is known whether Leeson Road is going to close. Cllr Bond asked if the length of the temporary close was known. Cllr Cooper confirmed that it would be twelve weeks. Cllr Steph Toogood noted it was now peak season. Cllr Cooper explained that it would be confusing if the charges were reintroduced now and then changed back to free parking if the road is closed. Cllr Cooper suggested that it would be a kind gesture to the businesses to continue free parking for the next three weeks. Cllr Cooper noted that it is a transitional period.

Cllr John Watkins asked for the wording to be formulated in a way that would mean a further meeting is not required so that once there is a definitive answer, the decision made now can be implemented.

Cllr Cooper suggested the following amendment to the report recommendation:

As soon as there is a clear indication that Leeson Road is open, is operational and is long term, charging will resume on a Saturday. In the meantime, free parking on a Saturday will continue, to aid Town businesses, only during this transitional period of not knowing whether Leeson Road is going to remain open long term.

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

Agree that as soon as there is a clear indication that Leeson Road is open, is operational and is long term, charging will resume on a Saturday. In the meantime, free parking on a Saturday will continue, to aid Town businesses, only during this transitional period of not knowing whether Leeson Road is going to remain open long term.

63/24 CONTRIBUTION TO FIREWORKS IN CARNIVAL WEEK

The Town Clerk explained that this matter had been discussed at the Business and Community Committee and it was agreed to refer the matter to Town Council for a decision. The Town Clerk noted that the contribution had previously been allocated to the Miscellaneous budget but the Miscellaneous budget did not exist this year. The Town Clerk explained that the Community Development budget would need to be used in the absence of a Miscellaneous budget. Cllr Steve Cooper asked if the Spyglass asked in advance or if it a relatively new request. The Town Clerk confirmed it was a relatively new request.

Cllr Steve Cooper explained that Ventnor Town Council had contributed to the Fireworks in the past. Cllr Ian Bond understood that the Community Development budget was fully committed.

The Town Clerk explained that the Community Development budget paid for salaries and rent and some aspects of Ventnor Day but was not fully committed.

Cllr James Toogood noted that a decision had just been taken to continue free parking and there had to be a balance so there should be a contribution to the fireworks.

Cllr Mark Jefferies explained that this had been previously taken to the Assets and Services Working Group and approved through that Group. Cllr Mark Jefferies suggested that there should be a contribution this year and contact should be made with the Spyglass earlier next year to ask if they would be looking for a contribution.

Cllr Steve Milford explained that there had been previous discussions on this matter and some people disagree with fireworks. Cllr Milford suggested that alternatives could be considered such as lasers or similar.

Cllr Julie Hutchison had concerns about the environmental impact of fireworks.

Cllr Dave Logan suggested agreeing to the contribution this year but with reservations to discuss alternatives for next year.

Cllr John Watkins noted that this was a last minute request every year. Cllr Watkins would like this to be budgeted for properly. Cllr Watkins noted that he is not particularly in favour for reasons already mentioned including the environmental impact. Cllr Watkins expressed concern for the budget being stretched and would not support giving money this year but on the condition that if any funding is requested, it is done so in good time and alternatives discussed.

Cllr Linda Jefferies raised concerns with a laser show and the effects it could have on those in the crowd with epilepsy or autism as it could interfere with their wellbeing.

Cllr Steph Toogood explained that the request came through her and that is how it has been requested previously. In relation to the offsetting of the carbon footprint, Cllr Steph Toogood noted that a Community Orchard would be developed which could help to offset the carbon footprint. Cllr Steph Toogood acknowledged that the request was late and the preference would be to receive it sooner. Cllr Steph Toogood noted that the full cost of the fireworks is £3,500 so the contribution would make a difference and there had been other contributions from businesses and the Ventnor Enhancement Fund.

Cllr Steve Cooper explained that there has to be a balanced view. The fireworks in Ventnor are well known and there are those who travel to Ventnor for Carnival night and the fireworks which has a considerable effect on the businesses. Cllr Steve Cooper noted that the Council is here to serve the community which includes the business community. Cllr Steve Cooper would support the funding of £250 for the fireworks this year. Cllr Steve Cooper suggested that the options need to be considered as Cllr Linda Jefferies made an important point about the effect of lasers. Cllr Cooper noted that the request had come at a late stage and suggested talking to the business about lasers, fireworks and the contribution request being earlier than later.

It was proposed by Councillor Steph Toogood , seconded by Councillor James Toogood, and resolved by a vote of 7 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention, to:

Agree that Ventnor Town Council contribute £250 to the Fireworks for Carnival Week this year.

64/24 CCTV

The Town Clerk summarised the report and explained that she had consulted with the Police and Isle of Wight Council about the proposal for CCTV at the public toilets at the Eastern Esplanade. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Police had responded and not voiced any objections, but she was yet to hear from the Isle of Wight Council. The Town Clerk confirmed that she had not received any representations from the public to date.

Cllr Steph Toogood asked who would monitor the CCTV. The Town Clerk confirmed that she would monitor the CCTV with the new Policy, Projects and Premises Officer who would have dedicated responsibility for the CCTV.

Cllr Ian Bond cautioned using the word monitoring as it would suggest that someone is watching it. Cllr Bond noted that we have access to the CCTV and would only give footage to the Police in response to an incident being investigated.

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

- a) Agree the proposed CCTV policy appended to Report 36/24.
 - b) Agree that this policy be published on a dedicated CCTV page on the Council's website and be made available for public inspection at its offices, and to agree to display signage prominently at locations covered by its CCTV as set out in Section 6 of the policy.
 - c) Note that the remaining action points from its decision in minute 11/24 will be progressed by the Buildings Maintenance Committee.
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65/24 IWALC

Cllr Steve Cooper explained that he had been voted as Vice-Chair of IWALC. Cllr Cooper can only do take this position if is a representative for Ventnor Town Council. Cllr Cassie Bailey had indicated that she was willing to let Cllr Cooper take her position and hadn't attended any meetings.

Cllr Steve Milford noted that as Cllr Cassie Bailey had resigned from Ventnor Town Council and proposed that Cllr Cooper take Cllr Bailey's place.

Cllr Cooper explained that if he is required to chair a meeting for IWALC, Cllr Steph Toogood would step down and Cllr Cooper would be the voting representative at those meetings.

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

Agree that Cllr Steve Cooper replace Cllr Cassie Bailey as a representative for IWALC.

66/24 MEMORIAL TO KEVIN GARLICK

Cllr Steph Toogood thanked Andy Smith for attending the meeting. Cllr Steph Toogood explained that a collection box was placed in the Post Office which raised £811. Cllr Steph Toogood explained that the original plan was to place a stainless steel plaque on a tree but given the amount of money, Kevin Garlick's widow was consulted. There is a small amount of grass by the wall which is too small for children to play on and it is a problematic area. The cost of removing the grass and replacing it with top soil and shrubs has been explored. A memorial plaque in the shape of a shoe or boot would then be placed in the area. The Town Clerk advised that a maintenance agreement should be put in place to look after the area. Ventnor Enhancement Fund have offered to assist with pruning the shrubs. The proposal does not involve any cost or labour for Ventnor Town Council.

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

Approve the proposal for the memorial to the late Kevin Garlick subject to the full plans being submitted to the Town Council and an agreement for maintenance arranged.

67/24 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

Cllr Steve Cooper invited nominations for the vacancy on the Planning Committee. However, there were no nominations forthcoming so Planning Committee continues to have a vacancy.

Cllr Steve Cooper invited nominations for the two vacancies Buildings Maintenance Committee. Cllr Linda Jefferies and Cllr James Toogood were appointed to the Buildings Maintenance Committee.

Cllr Steve Cooper invited nominations for the two vacancies on the Business and Community Committee. Cllr Linda Jefferies and Cllr James Toogood were appointed to the Business and Community Committee vacancies.

Cllr Steve Cooper invited nominations for the vacancy on the Policy and Resources Committee. Cllr John Watkins was appointed to the Policy and Resources Committee.

68/24 MOTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Steve Cooper confirmed that Motions B and C had been withdrawn by Cllr Julie Hutchison.

A) PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER

Cllr Ian Bond introduced the Motion and explained that it related to the restrictions of dogs on beaches. Cllr Bond explained that the Isle of Wight Council has had a standard approach to the restrictions of dogs on beaches for quite some time and there had been suggestions before about adopting a more flexible approach. The proposal in the Motion has two aspects. It is not proposing to lift all the restrictions. The proposal is to review the timings and the suggestion is to look at what Cornwall has done successfully and restrict dogs on beaches in July and August between 10am and 6pm. The second part of the proposal is to encourage the Isle of Wight Council to consult Town and Parish Councils rather than impose the same bans on everyone. Cllr Bond suggested any set of regulations need to meet a balance between the interests of different beach users and the island has many responsible dog owners both resident and visiting who would enjoy using the beach away from peak times. Cllr Bond suggested that the beach is often unused away from peak times. Cllr Bond suggested the beach is not heavily used in May, June and September due to the weather in recent years. Cllr Bond suggested that allowing people to use the beaches with their dogs would enhance the quality of life for many people. Cllr Bond suggested that it would make the Island more attractive as a visitor destination. Cllr Bond had been contacted by someone who runs a holiday business in Ventnor who said that more of his guests bring their dogs with 99.9% aware of picking up afterwards. Cllr Bond suggested that pet travel is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors. Cllr Bond suggested that dog owners are more likely to visit the town or stay longer if they know dogs are welcome.

Cllr Steve Cooper sought a point of clarity on the last bullet point of the Motion regarding consultation with Town and Parish Councils on each beach. Cllr Bond would expect councils to consult public and noted that the Isle of Wight Council would be consulting the public on this issue in the autumn and is taking views now. Cllr Bond noted that the key point is that there should be some flexibility for different towns to do different things if they wish. Cllr Cooper has received requests about being able to bring a dog. Cllr Cooper noted that it could potentially divide communities and Ventnor Town Council is about bringing people together and finding compromise where possible.

Cllr Linda Jefferies suggested that allowing dogs on the beach could negatively affect tourism.

Cllr Mark Jefferies had been contacted by residents, some of whom have dogs, and most are against it. Cllr Jefferies had received a comment about the time. Cllr Jefferies noted that with the spell of hot weather, people had often been on the beach early in the morning and late in the evening. Cllr Jefferies had received approximately fifteen emails on this issue with only one person in agreement.

Cllr Steph Toogood noted that there are strong views on this issue. Cllr Steph Toogood explained that there were some local air bnb's that say they are losing trade and they believe it would increase tourism. Cllr Steph Toogood suggested that Ventnor should have a public consultation. Cllr Steph Toogood had been to St Helens which is a dog friendly beach and is similar to Ventnor and had not witnessed any problems.

Cllr Steve Cooper noted that more people are taking their dogs on holiday. Cllr Cooper noted that there are people who would be disturbed by dogs in peak season and there are people who don't pick up after their dogs. Cllr Cooper suggested that Ventnor Town Council hold a public consultation.

Cllr John Watkins agreed with having a public consultation. Cllr John Watkins agreed with Cllr Bond's suggested timings for dogs being on the beach. Cllr John Watkins suggested having the views of not just those who live in Ventnor but also those who visit Ventnor.

Cllr Dave Logan asked about the timescales. Cllr Bond explained that the restrictions have lapsed. Cllr Bond understood that new orders would be proposed by Isle of Wight Council with a consultation on those proposals in the autumn. Cllr Dave Logan agreed with a public consultation.

Cllr Steve Milford noted that he is not in favour of blanket bans and this gives an opportunity to talk about it and support consultation.

Cllr Mark Jefferies would support full consultation.

Cllr Bond suggested that policy cannot be set on the basis of the most irresponsible person and that a balance has to be struck. Cllr Bond suggested that visitors choose destinations on whether they are pet friendly. Cllr Bond suggested that dog friendly beaches get extra custom and gave Steephill Cove as an example.

The Motion proposed by Cllr Ian Bond was seconded by Cllr Steve Milford and carried by a vote of 9 in favour and 1 abstention.

69/24 SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS FOR 2024

The Schedule was noted for information.

70/24 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.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

SIGNED BY THE MAYOR

DATE
