

Minutes of a meeting of VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL held at The Winter Gardens, Ventnor, I.W. on 12th March 2007.

Present: Councillor B.M.Lucas Town Mayor
Councillor Mrs.M.A.Cawley Deputy Town Mayor
Councillors A.C.Bartlett, C.J.Elvers, J.S.Fitzgerald-Bond, Mrs.B.Lawson,
S.B.Milford and Mrs.S.Scoccia.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.J.Mew and Mrs.V.Taylor.

1. PRAYERS

The meeting opened with prayers led by the Town Mayor.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th February 2007 were approved and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Scoccia said that the repainting of seats and street furniture on The Esplanade by the working party organised by the Probation Service would begin next week. The Town Clerk had made arrangements for the supply of materials.

Councillor Mrs.Cawley said that in connection with the One Million Blooms project Bonchurch Village Community Association had been awarded £2500.

The Town Mayor reported upon a recent meeting with Superintendent D.Jones regarding policing in the Ventnor area which he felt had been constructive.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this stage.

6. MEETING OF THE GRANTS COMMITTEE

It was Resolved - That the report of the meeting held on 28th February 2007 be received and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

Note: Councillor Mrs.Lawson stated that she had no interest in Grant No.3 in the minutes and Councillor Lucas said that it was he who had declared an interest in this specific grant.

7. DECORATIVE STREET LIGHTING

The Town Clerk reported that he had met the Head of Engineering Services to discuss the poor state of the festoon lighting in High Street and Pier Street. It had been agreed that the existing lighting be removed (this had been done during the course of the recent closure of the High Street) and the IW Council would be replacing three street light columns with new upgraded columns and would provide three electrically illuminated motifs to fit on to these columns. The Town Council will be consulted on the type of motifs to be fitted. Any further illuminated motifs could be provided by the Town Council. This arrangement was welcomed by members and it was agreed that an approach be made to local businesses to find out if they would be interested in contributing towards the cost of future new motifs.

8. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Town Council was invited to make comments for consideration by the Isle of Wight Council in connection with this Strategy which was looking into the services currently being provided for young people aged between 13 and 19 by both statutory and voluntary bodies. In due course a selected number of key stakeholders would be invited to a formal meeting when all views submitted could be clarified. It was agreed to draw the attention of the IW Council to the fact that whilst there was a considerable amount of costly equipment at Ventnor Youth Centre the Centre was underfunded and consequently understaffed with the result that for much of the time the Centre was not open when it could be offering a valuable service. It is felt that this is an issue which should be considered.

9. FURTHER ELECTORAL REVIEW OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT

A letter was received from The Boundary Committee for England relating to the review to be undertaken which aims to make sure where possible that every councillor in each ward represents the same number of electors and takes into account the identities and interests of local communities in the area. The Town Council was invited to submit any views relating to the electoral arrangements for their own area and also for the Isle of Wight Council.

It was Resolved -

- (a) That The Boundary Committee be informed that the Town Council consider no changes are required in respect of the existing town council arrangements;
- (b) That in respect of the number of councillors serving on the Isle of Wight Council this number should not be reduced in view of the existing pressure on members which could mean that more work would have to be undertaken by local councillors who give their services voluntarily and already have a considerable workload in dealing with local affairs both as councillors and as active members of the community.

10. CENTRAL CAR PARK VENTNOR

Councillor Mrs.Lawson expressed her concern that she had been told by a local trader that the IW Council were considering changing the designation of this car park from long term to short term and that the Town Council had agreed to this proposal. This was not the case and Councillor Lawson said that whilst there would be arguments for and against a change it was essential that the Town Council be given proper notice and an opportunity to make their views known. This was agreed and the Town Clerk was asked to write to the IW Council accordingly.

11. VENTNOR BOTANIC GARDEN

Councillor A.C.Bartlett said that it had been brought to his attention that discussions were taking place regarding the future of the former Smuggling Museum involving a commercial use. He was concerned that the Town Council had no information about this matter since the Botanic Garden was an important feature for Ventnor. The Town Clerk was instructed to make contact with the officers involved and to ask that the Town Council be given the opportunity to consider and discuss any Intended change in the use of the former Smuggling Museum.

12. PAYMENTS TO RETIRING SENIOR OFFICERS

Councillor Bartlett expressed concern at the reports which had appeared in the Press regarding enhanced payments made to senior officers who had left the service of the Isle of Wight Council. He pointed out that the issue had been raised by the District Auditor who appeared to cast some doubt on the way in which these payments had been made and there was apparently legal advice on the matter which had been disregarded. It concerned Councillor Bartlett that public funds were being used in a way which was not proper and the extra costs involved were not clearly stated. He asked that the Town Council refer the matter to the Ombudsman seeking further clarification of the statements made by the District Auditor and the Isle of Wight Council.

The Town Mayor said that the issue was primarily one for the Isle of Wight Council to determine and any referral to The Ombudsman would have to be limited to questions of fact.

After some discussion it was agreed that the matters raised by Councillor Bartlett be brought to the attention of The Ombudsman.

13. EASTER AND SPRING BANK HOLIDAY REFUSE COLLECTION

ARRANGEMENTS 2007 The Town Clerk circulated details of these arrangements.

14. REPORT OF THE FINANCIAL OFFICER

The written report of the Financial Officer was received. He was authorised to investigate alternative banking facilities and report back.

15. QUESTIONS

Several questions were asked and answers given.

Town Mayor