

Minutes of a meeting of VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL held at The Winter Gardens, Ventnor, IW on 9th March 2009.

Present: Councillor Mrs.S.J.Scoccia Town Mayor
Councillor Mrs.M.Cawley Deputy Town Mayor
Councillors C.J.Eivers, J.S.Fitzgerald-Bond, B.M.Lucas, R.J.Mew, S.B.Milford,
M/s D.Robinson, Mrs.V.Taylor and C.Welsford.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A.C.Bartlett.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2009 were approved and signed.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs.V.Taylor and C.Welsford declared personal interests in Agenda Item No.10 relating to school reorganisation in Ventnor and Councillor C.Welsford also declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 4 relating to allotments on the Eastern Cliffs.

3. PROVISION OF ALLOTMENTS ON LAND AT THE EASTERN CLIFFS

The Town Mayor invited members of the public present at the meeting to give their views and make comments upon the proposal to provide allotment gardens on land on the Eastern Cliffs. A number of speakers expressed their objections for various reasons including the opinion that the land should be retained for its present use generally by the public, that the site was unsuitable because of its soil and exposed position and it was regularly used as a play area by children. Members of the Council by a majority also felt that the proposed use should not be pursued having regard to the opinion of so many residents which had been made known. It was Resolved - That the Council do not proceed with this scheme but continue to seek other sites where allotment gardens could be established to meet the large and growing demand.

It was agreed to invite an officer of the Footprint Trust to attend a meeting to explain the practical advantages of the Adopt-A-Garden Scheme.

4. REPORT OF THE POLICE

A report was made by the police on recent activity.

5. CONSULTATION IN RESPECT OF LOCAL BUS SERVICES

The Town Council were invited by the I.W.Council to comment upon the bus network affecting the Ventnor area particularly in respect of journeys that are contracted at the present time and of any unmet public transport needs. At the invitation of the Town Council Mr.Stuart George of the Bus Users Committee attended and provided information and advice. The Town Mayor thanked Mr.George for his study of the bus services and his detailed recommendations.

It was Resolved - To adopt the recommendations made by Mr.George and convey these to the Public Transport Officer of the I.W.Council.

6. REPORT OF GRANTS COMMITTEE DATED 23rd FEBRUARY 2009

The report of the Grants Committee dated 23rd February 2009 was received and the recommendations contained therein were approved.

Councillor B.M.Lucas and Mrs.S.J.Scoccia declared personal interests in Ventnor Together and Councillors J.S.Fitzgerald-Bond and Mrs.V.Taylor personal interests in Ventnor Skate Park.

7. WORK AT THE EASTERN ESPLANADE VENTNOR

Further to Minute No 8 of the meeting of the Town Council held on 9th February 2009 the Town Clerk submitted a reply from Mr. Stuart Love, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods of the IW Council copies of which he had circulated to members. Mr. Love disputed the accuracy of the statement by the Council that the work that had been carried out is totally changed from the original plans. He said that the only substantive change is the segregation between the pool and access road was altered to a wall rather than railings as originally referred to in the Committee report and as far as the Town Council's complaint that they were not consulted he referred to the statement already given by the Head of Planning that matters dealt with under reserved conditions did not require further consultation. Mr. Love said that officers of his department had met with the Town Council to discuss potential changes to the wall and paddling pool and discussions were ongoing. He saw no reason for an additional meeting with himself and elected members at this stage.

Members were dissatisfied with this reply and agreed that a formal complaint on the process be made by the Town Clerk in consultation with Councillors B.M. Lucas, M/s D. Robinson, Mrs. V. Taylor and C. Welsford.

Councillors J.S. Fitzgerald-Bond and Mrs. S.J. Scoccia declared interests in this matter as members of the IW Council.

8. VENTNOR ESPLANADE RAILINGS

The Town Council considered the proposal by the IW Council to erect new railings on part of The Esplanade and at the invitation of the Town Mayor Mr. J. Blake and his daughter attended the meeting and spoke of their concerns. Mr. Blake said that it is impossible to continue his trading on the beach if railings were installed because of the problems of siting and removing beach huts. He stated that the suggestion that he could do so by the use of additional steps was not practical and the use of a Hiab was beyond the means of his trading. He was supported in his views by Councillor Mrs. S.J. Scoccia who had attended meetings on site with Mr. Blake and his daughter and an officer of the I.W. Council. The provision of these railings on the grounds of health and safety was carrying this issue beyond what is reasonable and it has to be accepted that risks have to be measured by experience and there is no evidence that people have been falling off The Esplanade frequently and indeed there have been more injuries suffered by people falling on the steps.

The Town Council point out that the present operation of the beach facilities are an inherent and traditional part of the business of Ventnor and the loss of the service would have a great knock-on effect on the well-being and economic interest of the town as a holiday resort.

Councillor Scoccia suggested that the edge of the footpath could easily be marked with a wide bright paint and/or suitably stippled as an indication to pedestrians and this idea was supported by members. Councillor J.S. Fitzgerald-Bond, the other IW Councillor for Ventnor stressed that he too did not support the erection of the new railings and would make known his opposition.

It was Resolved - That the Town Council ask that the proposal for the new railings be abandoned and that the suggestion made by Councillor Mrs. Scoccia be investigated and adopted.

9. SCHOOL REORGANISATION IN VENTNOR

Councillor Alan Wells, IW Council Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, wrote regarding the representations made by the Town Council in December 2008 concerning the lack of proper consultation on this matter and the objection to the manner in which it had been dealt with. Copies of the letter from Councillor Alan Wells were circulated to members.

The Town Council took note of the contents of the letter and the arguments it contained. Councillor Welsford said there was a complete lack of evidence to support the arguments advanced by Councillor Wells. He would take up the matter with the Local Government Ombudsman.

It was Resolved - To support this action.

Councillors J.S.Fitzgerald-Bond, B.M.Lucas and Mrs. S.J.Scoccia abstained from voting on this matter.

10. REPORT OF THE FINANCIAL OFFICER

The written report of the Financial Officer was circulated to members.

11. VENTNOR CARNIVAL ASSOCIATION

It was Resolved - That a grant of £1000 be made to Ventnor Carnival Association to cover losses on the 2008 Carnival.

It was agreed that the Ventnor Carnival was of great importance to the town and needed to be continued. It was understood the the Association were investigating ways and means of raising funds from the whole community and this was felt to be the way forward by members of the Council.

Councillor R.J.Mew declared a personal interest in this matter.

12. IW ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Councillor Mew reported upon matters dealt with by the Association.

13. VENTNOR PARTNERHSHIP.

Minutes of the last meeting of Ventnor Partnership were circulated.

Arising thereon it was agreed that Mrs.Linda Chester Chairman of Ventnor Business Association be invited to address the Council on the arrangements for the Ventnor Bay Festival to be held on 24th and 25th October 2009 and members indicated their support for this event.

14. REVIEW OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF STAFF

It was Resolved - That a special meeting of the Town Council be held on 23rd March 2009 to implement a review of staff salaries and terms and conditions of service under Standing Order 14.

Town Mayor