



Working together for Cowes

COWES TOWN COUNCIL
NORTHWOOD HOUSE SUB GROUP MEETING 26TH JANUARY 2010

MINUTES

PRESENT: Cllrs Banks, Matthews, Wells & Walters

APOLOGIES: Cllrs Slade, Thwaites

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Wells proposed and unanimously agreed.

OUTCOME OF MEETING

Agreed that the outcome from this meeting is to collate a series of questions for IW Council and for the Trustees, to enable taking forward to Cowes Town Council and to help in arriving at the decision to move to the position of Custodian Trustee.

FEEDBACK FROM COUNCILLORS

Cllr Walters - Clear that to effect a disposal would go against the Charities Commission regulations because of the surrounding land.

Discussed the disposal of the land by Medina Borough Council to Medina Housing to effect the building of Park Court. The two documents – the Land Registry document and the second is the transfer document do not tally. Medina Housing has also fenced off a section of the land and has illegally taken possession for at least the last 30 years. No rent has been charged. At one stage the IW Council were going to transfer it to Medina Housing. Cabinet Paper says that this transaction is legally binding even though it was done wrongly. It is clear that they knew of this in a Cabinet Paper of 2003. On checking with the Charities Commission their suggestion is to write to them under Section 8 of the Charities Act and they will institute a formal investigation. Often legal advice can be given freely by the Charities Commission.

Church Lodge – when the IW Council gave a lease to the current tenant they transgressed the Charities Commission rule.

Car Park & Toilets – Suggestion that this has an amenity value. The IW Council is not managing the Coach park in a commercial fashion by fencing off to the detriment of the Trustees. Coaches are only there for 6 months of the year. Serious issues of negligence.

Double entry of the costs for the Registrar's occupation of the building. Whilst agreeing that it represents the prepayment of the rent they also show it as a cost and IW Council contribution towards the House.

Further anomaly re the salary income for staff employed at the House. Went from £75k to £87k then up to £131k then to £137k then back down to £108k over 5 years. Appears to be an incorrect posting somewhere.

Cabinet Paper talks about accepting the gift of deed to the Council but no responsibility to undertake maintenance. It is implicit in accepting the Gift that maintenance is an obligation.

Requirement of a programme of works to be put to Property Services by the Trustees.

Trust Fund had a balance of £102,000 in 1995 (Mentioned in a Paper 2nd October 2001). Where is that money now?

Insurance of the property. Currently insured by IW Council. Have any claims been made?

Supervision of caretakers.

Need clarification on the title of the property and being able to raise money on the title. IW council says Trustees can borrow against the title but title is owned by Custodian Trustee.

Need to rewrite the 2002 scheme.

Need to clarify the rating position of the House. IW Council get 80% rating relief (against £15,000) because it is a charity. Who pays the 20%? Car Park is rated separately. Who is paying the rates of the Car Park?

THE WAY FORWARD

Need to fully involve IW Councillors (Cllr George Brown in particular as the local member). Need to deal with Trustees situation. Need IW Council to nominate a Trustee. Suggest Dave Burbage? Three co-opted Trustee positions to be filled. Need to get the Trust to have an EGM and appoint an honorary treasurer. Get them to set up a Finance sub Committee, Friends of Northwood House sub-committee (to undertake PR). Need for a fully constituted board of Trustees. Get a chairperson in place.

Agreed that the notion of throwing £30k to the Trustees is a red herring and no clear understanding of what this will achieve.

Talk to leading Councillors to get a political direction and support re findings as above and the conclusions as we see it in order to find a way forward that is positive. AW and DW to set up meeting with Cllrs Pugh, Brown and Bingham.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

Meet again after meeting with IW Councillors. Set meeting times to suit majority of sub group members.