



COWES TOWN COUNCIL
NORTHWOOD HOUSE SUB GROUP MEETING 18th October 2010 at
Northwood House at 2.00pm

MINUTES

1 **PRESENT:** Cllrs Wells (Chair), Sanderson, Walters, Ellis (for part of meeting), Robinson, Matthews, Mazillius (for part of meeting)

2 **APOLOGIES:** Cllrs Banks, Thwaites, Wilcox & Peacey-Wlicox

3 **UPDATE**

The Chairman updated Councillors with the current position and the reason for calling the meeting. He outlined that in two recent Town Council meetings Cllr Thwaites in her role as Chair of Northwood House Trustees had asked the Town Council for various areas of financial support. Namely:

- To run the Community Hall on behalf of the Trustees and to locate Council Offices in that building
- To finance the running of the children's play area
- To contribute to or to find sponsorship for the street lighting within the Park.

The purpose of calling the meeting was to consider those requests and feed back with a recommendation to the full Town Council.

4 **ACCOMMODATION**

The sub group then discussed the matter of the Town Council office accommodation and the Chair updated members with the recommendation that the Assistant Town Clerk Working Group who are dealing with that particular issue have agreed to make to the full Town Council at the next meeting. That decision is that the working group did not feel that they could support taking offices in Northwood House for the following reasons:

- Neither the office space proposed nor the building itself (the vacated Registrar's Office) is not DDA (Disabled Disability Act) compliant, which is a requirement for public buildings under current legislation
- The Trustees have not been able to give costings for hiring the office space, nor any indicative figures. They do not appear to be in a position to move forward.
- The Trustees are only able to offer a maximum 6 month lease as confirmed by Cllr Thwaites at the last CTC meeting
- Whilst the former Registrars Office is in relative good condition, since the Town Council would not require all the space some work would have to be done (presumably at a cost to CTC) to divide the office space
- The office space proposed is not suited for lone working (where there are no other occupants of the office space) particularly as the Assistant Town Clerk would be sited there as the main occupant.

The recommendation of the Assistant Town Clerk Working Group is to take two office units and a storage area in Baring Chambers, Denmark Road. The Northwood House sub group supported that decision unanimously.

5 DISCUSSION

There followed lengthy discussion regarding the various proposals and a number of issues were raised as follows.

- Questions were asked about the Trustees and their Advisors. Members were not aware of who are Trustees nor the role or responsibilities of the Advisors. There was concern that the Advisors, who are arbitrarily appointed, know more of what is going on with the Trust than elected Council members. Agreed that the Trustees be asked for clarification
- The issue about the priority of the Trustees to use any finance collected for the maintenance of the House rather than for the upkeep of the Park and services in it (as confirmed by Cllr Thwaites at a recent meeting) was discussed. It was felt by all members that the people of Cowes cared more deeply that the Park and the services within it remain open and maintained rather than the House be kept open and available for the public use.
- It was agreed that the Trustees should be asked to keep Cowes Town Council informed of any negotiations and give opportunity for input from the Council before any final decisions are made regarding the future of the House

6 PROPOSAL

After lengthy discussion the Chair, backed by other members put forward a proposal in principle, that Cowes Town Council make an offer to the Trustees that they (CTC) take

over the running and management of the Ward Avenue Car Park and with the proceeds manage the whole of the Park including all services (Toilets, Tennis Courts, Children's Play Area, Dog and Litter bin emptying, grass cutting etc). Open book accounting could show all income from the Car Park and all costs to maintain the Park and at each year end excess funds from the Car Park income would be paid over to the Trustees for use in developing the future of the House. This would enable the Trustees to concentrate their efforts in the future of the House hiving off the Park from their responsibility and would maintain the municipal management of the open public area with the elected body for the Town. The Town Council has had previous experience from which it could draw in managing a public Car Park (the old Denmark Road car park) and could work alongside the Local Authority (IW Council) to ensure fees were in line with the current overall position on the Island.

It was agreed that work needs to be done to develop this proposal, not least to see if there would be any agreement from the Trustees to pursue it. It was understood by members that the Trustees are in discussion with a commercial organisation to run the Ward Avenue Car Park but it was felt that the Town Council proposal could result in considerably better value for money to the Trust since there would not be any need for a profit element.

7 RECOMMENDATION

It was agreed by the Sub Group to recommend to Cowes Town Council that an offer be made to Northwood House Trustees as above; namely that Cowes Town Council take over the management of the Ward Avenue Car Park and with the proceeds manage the parkland attached to Northwood House including all the current services. Open book accounting could show all income from the Car Park and all costs to maintain the Park and at each year end excess funds from the Car Park income would be paid over to the Trustees for use in developing the future of the House.

This proposal would be subject to clarification of the costs of maintenance including grass cutting, operating toilets and the other services detailed previously in these Minutes.

Bearing in mind that members understood negotiations were in hand for the future management of the Car Park, it was agreed that the Chair make contact with the Trustees as a matter of urgency to establish if the Trustees would be interested in pursuing such a proposal if it was agreed by Full Council.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm