



SANDOWN TOWN COUNCIL – MEETING MINUTES – 20 MARCH 2023

Minutes of the Meeting of Sandown Town Council held on **MONDAY, 20 MARCH 2023** at The Broadway Centre, 1 Broadway, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 9GG.

Present: Paddy Lightfoot (Mayor), Alex Lightfoot (Deputy Mayor), Debbie Andre, Frank Baldry, Emily Brothers, Ian Fletcher, Jenny Hicks, Heather Humby, Robert May, Ian Ward, Toby Wilcock.

Also Present: Richard Priest (Clerk), Jennifer Armstrong (RFO), and 6 members of the public.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS:

A member of the public asked a question in relation to how Sandown Town Council could progress rejuvenating the high street without waiting for government funding. The Mayor responded that the council was working in conjunction with the Isle of Wight council on a High Street Task Force initiative which did not come with funding but would develop a vision for the high street with stakeholders and would inform the Bay Regeneration Plan. The biggest issue was engagement with business as Sandown did not have a Business Association. It was noted that the Island Collective was involved with the regeneration work on the Island. A follow-up question was asked in relation to a Business Improvement District (BID) for Sandown and it was noted that there was a BID for the Island.

Reverend Williams advised the meeting that work on the Lych Gate at Christ Church, which was a heritage feature, would be started next week. The pavement would be blocked for a short period of time.

Reverend Williams also thanked the council for its help securing grant funding to support the Warm Spaces initiative, noting that Lake Methodist Church had also been able to provide a Warm Space as a result of the funding. He continued to ask if there was any update on the next round of funding? The Clerk advised that there had been a lot of challenge from the awarding body, which did not seem to be consistent with other applications and could be related to coverage in the media regarding the legality of the budget.

Mr Alan Jones sought reassurance that the end of the lease at Brown's would not lead to the site falling into disrepair and that the grounds and structures would be maintained. Cllr Andre responded a report was due to be considered by the Isle of Wight council to address the site's future and Mr Jones would be welcome to attend that meeting. She provided assurance the site would not just be left.

The Clerk then provided a response to a question raised by a member of public at a previous meeting regarding Cllr Wilcock's attendance and to Cllrs Andre and Brothers call

to have Cllr Wilcock disqualified. Advice from the monitoring officer had been sought and he had responded:

“Thank you for contacting me. Whether there has been compliance is a matter for Sandown Town Council and its interpretation of the specific facts as they apply in the context of the six month rule. It is fact dependent. The rationale of the six month rule is to ensure that there is engagement by a councillor with the duties of that office. Provided a councillor can come within section 85(2) [or (3)] beforehand, then there is deemed attendance which starts the clock again”.

The Clerk stated his position was that Cllr Wilcock should not be disqualified and that the way forward was to accept the Clerk’s guidance in line with the monitoring officers response; that Cllrs Andre and Brothers withdraw the request for disqualification and apologise to Cllr Wilcock. He reiterated that Cllr Wilcock had missed a meeting due to paternity leave and then because of a meeting being postponed due to the death of her Majesty the Queen, he had also in the interim attended working party and a launch event. The clerk advised he would have significant concerns regarding a councillor being disqualified due to paternity leave adding if councillors did not want to accept his position supported by the guidance from the monitoring officer her would contact the Equality Advisory Support Service for next steps.

Cllrs Andre and Brothers responded it was their duty as councillors to challenge so while they would accept the monitoring officer’s guidance they would not apologise.

The Mayor then informed the meeting he was making a statement of correction following statements made in the meeting on 8 February 2023 (attached to and forming part of these minutes).

Cllr Brothers wished to debate the matter and failed to respond to the chairs request to move forward. A motion was proposed and duly seconded that Cllr Brothers are not heard on this matter. Councillors’ votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements and a named vote was requested; the results were as follows and it was:

For (7)

Cllrs Frank Baldry, Ian Fletcher, Robert May, Ian Ward, Toby Wilcock, Alex Lightfoot, Paddy Lightfoot

Against (4)

Cllrs Emily Brothers, Debbie Andre, Heather Humby and Jenny Hicks

Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

That that Councillor Brothers no longer be heard on the matter.

70-2022/2023 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Sue Betts.

71-2022/2023

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Cllrs Andre and Ward declared an interest regarding any matters relating to the Isle of Wight Council. Cllr Andre added she would not comment on any planning matters as a ward member.

Cllr Brothers declared an interest on school matters as a governor of the Cornerstone Federation.

Cllr Hicks declared she was a Lake Parish Councillor.

2. A request for a written dispensation had been received and approved from Cllr Paddy Lightfoot to permit him to speak in relation to a planning application which was located close to his property.

72-2022/2023 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Cllr Brothers proposed an amendment to the minutes. However, the Mayor referred to the standing orders and members noted that since it was not a matter of accuracy or something which must be included in the minutes it was not a valid amendment as it was not a material correction and that minutes were not a verbatim record.

Cllr Brothers was also reminded that all members had had over a week since the papers were published to provide notice of any changes in advance of the meeting to ensure the minutes published were accurate and no prior notification of any inaccuracy had been received.

A proposal to approve the minutes of the 6 February 2023 subject to the correction of a typo in the date of the budget (2023/2023 to 2023/2024) was moved and duly seconded. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (9), Against (2), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023 be approved as a true record subject to the 2023/2023 being changed to 2023/2024.

73-2022/2023 FINANCES

1. To approve the Payments and Receipts lists as presented for January 2023

Expense claims from the Clerk were challenged. Clarification was provided that it was not always possible or cost effective to buy goods and services on credit and officers worked hard to ensure the best value for money was secured for the council. However, in the absence of a GPC card which was pending subject to resolution of banking mandates, a credit card must be used. There was a robust process in place to ensure all expenses were supported by receipts and approved by the Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

A proposal was moved and duly seconded, that the payments and receipts list for January 2023 be approved. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (11), Against (0), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

THAT the payments and receipts for January 2023 be approved.

2. To approve the Payments and Receipts lists as presented for February 2023

Members requested detail in relation to the allocation of the Household Support Grant and were advised that the monies had been passported to the schools as food vouchers. The Clerk also advised further funding had been applied for to support Warm Spaces across the bay.

Questions were raised in relation to the details of the centres customers. Members were reminded that hirers details were subject to GDPR and had been deliberately omitted from the report. The payments and receipts were verified by two nominated members every month and could be viewed by councillors at any time. Sharing hirers details via email would not be appropriate.

A proposal was moved and duly seconded, that the payments and receipts list for February 2023 be approved. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (11), Against (0), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

THAT the payments and receipts for February 2023 be approved.

3. To receive and note the verified bank reconciliations for January and February 2023

Questions were raised in relation to the how the reserves worked. The clerk responded that a breakdown of the income and reserves would be provided during the item on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the verified bank reconciliations for January and February 2023 were duly noted.

4. To receive and note the expenditure against budget through February 2023

Members sought clarification on the VAT position within the accounts and were advised that according to NALC guidelines and the proper practices from the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) VAT was excluded from local council budgets, cash and annual accounting statements. The expenditure against budget through February 2023 was noted.

5. To confirm the appointment of the Internal Auditor

Members were reminded that it was best practice to change audit providers on a regular basis and, in line with this, different auditors had been contacted. A new auditor had been sourced who had clerked on the Island for many years before moving to the mainland and had an excellent reputation.

A proposal was moved and duly seconded, that the auditor selected by officers be appointed. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (11), Against (0), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

THAT the auditor selected auditor by the RFO be appointed.

6. To consider the grant request from Victim Support

The grant request from Victim Support was considered. The key points raised during the debate were as follows and members felt that the application was not in line with the council's grant policy because of these:

- The application was generic and had been sent to all local councils.
- There was no targeted benefit to Sandown Residents
- The monies were being requested to support costs which could be considered operating costs.

During discussion, members noted that the Community Association had a number of personal alarms similar to those which funding was requested for and would be happy to donate these.

A proposal was moved and duly seconded, that the grant application be declined. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (11), Against (0), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

THAT the application for a grant from Victim Support be declined.

7. To approve the proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Mayor presented the strategy noting that while the council was not required to have a medium term financial strategy the decisions made by council previously provided the basis for the document. A number of amendments were suggested including:

- That the provision in Paragraph 4(ii) to exceptionally vire monies be removed.
- That in relation to the Broadway Centre, income targets should be set for an acceptable level of subsidy and the same be considered for public toilets.
- That the section regarding in grant funding be revised to show it should be inline with council priorities

In relation to the reserves, members noted that the provision for reserves to be vired under exceptional circumstances which was a policy of this council previously voted on

and that the council must have provision to be able to spend allocated reserves in the event of an exceptional event and cannot bind future councils' decisions in that way.

It was highlighted during debate that the Broadway Centre was a community asset and as such was not an profit generating venture and that the hall hire charges were reviewed annually by council. In terms of the public toilets, it would be very difficult to set usage targets to drive income.

Members were reminded that in relation to grant funding, council had resolved that officers could seek appropriate grant funding and without the town council submitting an application schools and Warm Spaces in Sandown would not have received recent funding.

A proposal was moved and duly seconded, that the item be deferred. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and the motion fell:

For (2), Against (9), Abstain (0)

A proposal was moved and duly seconded, that the present Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements and a named vote was requested; the results were as follows and it was:

For (9)

Cllrs Frank Baldry, Ian Fletcher, Jenny Hicks, Heather Humby, Robert May, Ian Ward, Toby Wilcock, Alex Lightfoot, Paddy Lightfoot

Against (4)

Cllrs Emily Brothers

Abstain (1)

Debbie Andre

RESOLVED

THAT the Medium-Term Financial Strategy be approved.

Members then received a presentation (attached to and forming part of these minutes) explaining the council's income and reserves based on a snapshot as of the 28 February 2023.

74-2022/2023 TOWN CLERK REPORT

Council noted the report from the Clerk who also introduced the new member of staff. Members were reassured that the recent survey of the building had indicated that the cracks forming in the render were as the result temperature variations and there were no structural issues.

Cllr Andre declared an interest in Los Altos Park due to the location of her property.

Other points discussed included:

- The extraordinary meeting which had been convened without the involvement of the clerk and subsequently cancelled.
- The new toilets at Eastern Gardens which had been tested and were expected to open on Thursday, 23 March 2023 in time for the Sprint. The old block would then be secured.
- The billing schedule for the SLA with Lake Parish Council (quarterly in arrears due to the RFO's capacity).
- Grass cutting at Los Altos Park, with members noting that some of the area previously mowed was now being left to rewild.
- In terms of additional grants there were some other projects at early stages but success cannot be pre-empted especially given some of the issues around the budget both in the media and on social media.
- Updates had been circulated to members regarding the place plan and other accessibility projects.

Cllr Brothers asked about the £4,000 grant and the Clerk highlighted her previous declaration of interest regarding the Cornerstone Federation and advised grants of £2,000 had been passported to the Bay C.E. Primary and Secondary Schools which were part of the Cornerstone Federation.

75-2022/2023 WORKING PARTIES

The report had been published and circulated prior to the meeting, and the notes from the meetings circulated afterwards, therefore, the Chair of the Public Realm (Assets) and Public Engagement working parties suggested the council move straight to the recommendations.

The Public Realm (Assets) Working Party made a recommendation to replace the guttering at the Broadway Centre, which had been damaged during the 2022 heatwave resulting in leakage during heavy rains. Clarification was provided that the guttering was not covered by a guarantee as it had melted in an extreme weather event and that three quotes had been requested but only one had been returned. There were monies in the budget for repairs to the centre and monies were held in reserves for emergency expenditure.

A proposal was moved and duly seconded to proceed with the installation of new guttering at the Broadway Centre at a cost of £1,750, and Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (10), Against (0), Abstain (1)

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Broadway Centre guttering be replaced at a cost of £1,750.

Following a joint meeting of the Public Realm (Assets) Working Party and the Public Engagement Working Party a recommendation to take forward the refurbishment of Yaverland Toilet had been put forward was discussed. Clarification was provided that this work related purely to Yaverland, that the refurbishment was in the Council's forward plan and that no loan would be taken without full council approval.

There was discussion regarding charges in taking out the works loan against the council's revenue and members were advised that any charges would be taken into account when the report to council to support the loan application was brought forward.

Members also noted that it would not be possible to begin the consultation or begin work on preparing the application without indicative costings for the project and details of the options available which could only be obtained through a tendering process. The budget for the loan had been based on the cost of the new unit at Eastern Gardens but was an indicative cost only and could not inform the application.

The recommendation was moved and duly seconded. An amendment to change the recommendation to "That the Public Realm (Assets) and Public Engagement working parties initiate the public consultation and engagement, to develop the project and report to full council" and removing "tendering process, and initial contact with PWLB" was moved and duly seconded and Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and the amendment fell.

For (7), Against (3), Abstain (1)

A further amendment was proposed that "with a business case" be added and duly seconded. Questions raised in relation to the nature of this business case and the costings to write an additional business case to the detailed and prescriptive information. Members were also reminded that staffing capacity was also an issue. The amendment could not be taken forward without this detail. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and the amendment fell.

For (2), Against (9), Abstain (0)

A vote was then taken on the substantive motion and councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and

For (9), Against (2), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

THAT the Public Realm (Assets) and Public Engagement working parties initiate the public consultation and engagement, tendering process, and initial contact with PWLB, to develop the Yaverland Toilet project and report to Full Council.

76-2022/2023 STATION DEFIBRILLATOR

Cllr Andre declared an interest as she had been involved in the project and left the room. Members discussed the request for funding and adopting a defibrillator at the Station, to be installed in an old phone box, as part of a community heritage project with monies

from the Town Improvements Budget. A confidential background paper had been provided outlining all partners involved and the different elements.

The recommendations in the report were moved and duly seconded. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (10), Against (0), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

- (i) THAT Sandown Town Council purchase the defibrillator and cabinet in support of the project, pay for its installation and add the unit to its asset register and insurance schedule.
- (ii) THAT this be subject to the necessary permissions from the land owner and person(s) responsible for the supply of electricity on the site.

77-2022/2023 MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

A proposal was moved and duly seconded, that the meeting be extended by 30 minutes. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (11), Against (0), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

THAT the meeting be extended by 30 minutes.

78-2022/2023 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Council noted the briefing paper on Equality and Diversity which sought to reassure council that it was meeting its duties in regard to the 2010 Act and that services to specific groups within the community did not breach legislation.

There was agreement that any actions should be proportionate. However, during discussion Cllr Brothers continued to suggest that the council was not fully considering equality and diversity, though she did not feel it would be appropriate paying for legal advice, and that equality impact assessments were required. She then cited beach wheelchairs as an example suggesting that since less than 1% of the population required a wheelchair it was no good use of public money to provide a beach wheelchair service.

The inclusion of equality and diversity questions in future consultations was also suggested and members were advised population demographics were available on the Isle of Wight Council's website.

79-2022/2023 TO RECEIVE ANY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES RAISED

None received.

80-2022/2023 TO RECEIVE ANY PLANNING MATTERS

The following applications were considered:

- [23/00302/FUL](#) - Lyndhurst Guest House, 8 Royal Crescent
- [23/00280/HOU](#) - 13 Broadway

No comments were made. However, the Clerk suggested that the proposers of the development of a children's home at the former Lyndhurst guest house to brief councillors in the same way Two Saints had.

81-2022/2023 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Andre thanked the Clerk for facilitating the meeting with residents regarding Post Office services and noted the eight councillors had also attended. While some questionnaires had not been collected the feedback of those which had been returned indicated recorded letters and parcel services were the biggest concern.

Cllr Andre had also received feedback on the plans for the revetment from residents and would feed that back to the relevant Isle of Wight council officer and this in due course would feed into the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Cllr Andre had also been contacted by residents of Riverside Park about a number of issues.

Cllr Humby gave a report on her councillor surgeries held at the Library each Thursday, on average three people attended each week. Cllr Humby also updated members on the last Sandown Forum meeting advising that the frequency of the Forum's meetings would be reduced to quarterly during 2023. The next meeting would be held on 19 April 2023.

Cllr Hicks had attended an exhibition at Quay Arts called "Just the Place" which included a spotlight on Sandown.

Cllr Ward advised members an article had appeared in the County Press providing an update to the public on situation with the Ocean Hotel including that it was a matter of legal proceedings and outlining where responsibility lies. Cllr Ward also noted he had been contacted by residents of Fairway Park.

82-2022/2023 MOTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Motion proposed by Cllr Alex Lightfoot (Paper X): Amendments to Standing Items on the Agenda (Paper L)

Cllr Alex Lightfoot proposed a motion that council amending the agenda to remove "To Receive Reports from Town Councillors and Outside Bodies" and "To receive any environmental issues raised" replacing verbal reports from councillors with written reports which could be published with the papers and on the website and including environmental matters in the clerks report.

Cllr Lightfoot suggested that this would provide the information to councillors and the public in advance of the meeting enabling them to be better prepared to ask questions and that it would allow decisions to be made in relation to the reports which wasn't possible under the current format as no prior notice was given of the matters. He also highlighted that other councillors similar to Sandown in size such as Ryde and Ventnor did

not have verbal reports on their agendas and that there was a 15 minute councillor surgery prior to the meeting which could be used for verbal updates.

During the debate a number of points were raised such as publication dates resulting in more up to date information not being available in time and it not being possible for all councillors to produce a written report.

The number of meetings a year was raised and members were reminded council had debated this issue a number of times and any decision regarding the number of meetings could not be revisited for six months.

The motion was not seconded and fell.

83-2022/2023 MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

A proposal was moved and duly seconded that public question time be moved forward to allow members of the public to leave before the council moved into private session. The vote was unanimously in favour of the change.

RESOLVED

THAT the order of the agenda be changed and Public Question Time be brought forward prior to the exclusion of the public and press.

84-2022/2023 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME:

A member of the public suggested that it would be useful if the Isle of Wight Council provided a central Equality and Diversity document but was advised that it needed to be proportionate for each different council as while all public bodies they were different sizes.

85-2022/2023 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

A proposal was moved and duly seconded, and Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (11), Against (0), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

THAT under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, namely Agenda item number 14 and 15 on the grounds that there is likely to be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 7, and 14 as defined in paragraphs 7, 9 and 10, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

86-2022/2023 YAVERLAND BUSINESS RATES

Cllrs Andre and Ward left the meeting as they had declared interests in Isle of Wight Council Matters.

A revised demand had been received following correspondence with the Isle of Wight Council. The new demand was for £4,673.40 and reflected the transfer of the toilets to Sandown Town Council on 11 December 2017. Members were provided an update in regard to officers meeting with the Isle of Wight Council to discuss the matter. During the debate Council instructed officers not to share their personal data with other agencies to progress the matter.

A proposal that the council continue dialogue with the local authority was moved and duly seconded and Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

For (9), Against (0), Abstain (0)

RESOLVED

THAT Sandown Town Council continue to challenge the demand from the Isle of Wight Council for back dated business rates at Yaverland Toilets.

87-2022/2023 STAFFING MATTERS

Members received a confidential update on staffing matters including details of the planned resolution for an ongoing HR matter. A proposal moved and duly seconded that the Clerk proceed with the outlined way forward in consultation with the Mayor. Councillors' votes were confirmed verbally to meet accessibility requirements; the results were as follows and it was:

RESOLVED

THAT the Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor, proceed with the outlined way forward with the ongoing HR matter to bring it to a conclusion.

For (10), Against (0), Abstain (1)

Meeting closed 21:50

Statement of Correction from Mayor Paddy Lightfoot 20 March 2023

In response to an article published in the Island Echo on 8 February 2023, authored by Councillors Debbie Andre and Emily Brothers

Extract from the article:

The Cllrs stated that “Councillor Alex Lightfoot’s 11% inflation-busting budget was approved by the majority, which included funds for projects not yet scoped, whilst offering up no savings to reduce the overall cost to the Sandown taxpayer and despite rising levels of reserves and no Medium Term Financial Strategy”

Mayors Response:

Many savings had already been built into the RFO’s underlying budget as they were made aware at the Cllr budget briefing. Reserves have been built as agreed by the same Councillors complaining, to provide funds for maintenance and replacement of STC owned facilities and equipment – this is financially prudent. The general reserves, which are now near the minimum requirement level having paid the bill for Eastern Gardens Toilets, are again something that both Councillors should be fully aware of. There is no requirement for a Council of our size to produce a medium-term financial strategy.

Extract from the article:

The statement went on further to state that “Cllrs Andre and Brothers proposed a package of savings in the region of £100,000, as they fought to bring down the proposed precept and argued that income should be taken into account.”

Mayors Response:

Cllrs Andre and Brothers uncosted proposal offered cessation of services on one hand and increase in spend in other areas, at no point was an overall figure of savings given so this figure is fictitious. As they were made aware at the Councillors budget briefing, in line with current advice, income is not taken into account.

Extract from the article:

In response to this week’s decision, Cllr Brothers has said: “In a bizarre turn of events, the Mayor, Cllr Paddy Lightfoot, insisted on competing proposals being considered first rather than allowing scrutiny to the substantive budget paper. This meant that we weren’t able to raise many important issues, such as the 11% inflation busting costs or the failure to assess equality impacts of the measures “

Mayors Response:

The process for dealing with the competing alternative budgets (not amendments - and this is key) was advised to all Councillors well in advance of the meeting to ensure a manageable process - no councillor objected when this process was published. The

budgets proposed were all alternative budgets not amendments, hence we treated each one in its own right. Councillors were made aware of this and the core of the budget was the same for budgets proposed by Cllr Alex Lightfoot and also Cllr Andre with her alternate budget regard to the post office. So there was ample opportunity to scrutinise the whole budget. With regard to equality impact, Cllr Andre and Brothers clearly hadn't read their papers prior to the meeting as Paper G: Paragraph 12 specifically addresses equality impact in the budget.

Extract from the article:

Cllr Brother went on to state, "I called for a fair, balanced and responsible budget but Sandown residents ended up with an additional burden and that is a real shame.

Mayors Response:

Cllr Brothers had the opportunity – as did all councillors, to present, what from her perspective, was such a budget. The process of setting this budget has been ongoing since August of last year. Cllrs Andre and Brothers did not present a budget. It is very grand sounding to call for a fair, balance and responsible budget, but then you need to present that alternative budget which they failed to do. It would have been irresponsible of the council to accept their proposal as there was no detail, no final budget or precept figure given. Also many of the uncostered proposals made were undeliverable as they form part of running contracts or lease agreements, hardly fair or responsible.

Extract from the article:

Cllr Brother went on to state, "The purpose of our amendments was to reduce the precept, but sadly there was little compassion shown amongst fellow councillors for the financial pressures being experienced by Sandown residents."

Mayors Response:

This is a very emotive statement, is dis-investment in Sandown compassion or dereliction of duty because of hard choices (my opinion) - no Councillor is unaware of the financial difficulties our residents are facing and the difficult choices to be made and yet we are duty bound to set a precept otherwise the IOW Council will do it for us.

Extract from the article:

Meanwhile, Cllr Andre has said: "How can we justify increasing the budget by just under £60k per annum for borrowing to fund replacement toilet blocks, one of which we have no responsibility for, without a business case having been presented?"

Mayors Response:

Again - it was made incredibly clear, repeatedly, although currently owned by the IOW Council, until the sale of the site is completed, there is no definitive future ownership of Pier Street toilets. No loan will be taken out until a definitive requirement is provided, costed and agreed by Council and both Councillors have been made well aware of this (again it was covered as recently as the Councillor budget

briefing). In the approved budget, the council is making prudent provision for the possibility of having to take out a loan only should it be required (in my opinion) .

Extract from the article:

Cllr Andre went on to state “Our amendments called for funds to be ring-fenced”.

Mayors Response:

All Cllrs should be well aware that some capital in reserves is ringfenced for the projects its supports; e.g. the Skatepark, the Steven Jenkins Playground - this is not new, it’s been ongoing for at least the last 18 months so I believe this statement is a lack of understanding of our financial controls, despite both councillors signing off on our accounts at every full council meeting.

Extract from the article:

Cllr Andre went on to state “Questions need to be asked that if the reprovision of either toilet block does not proceed, will the loan still be drawn down for other purposes?”

Mayors Response:

Cllr Andre and Brothers know the answer to that because they have been told; the answer is an emphatic no (and it’s also probably not legal to use a PWLB loan for purposes other than what was applied for)

Extract from the article:

Cllr Andre went on to state “We presented amendments that offered a real alternative budget for real people in the real world”.

Mayors Response:

Again what Cllr Andre and Brothers presented was a list of items they wanted to defund (Yaverland Toilets, Lifeguards, Los Altos grass cutting, beach litter picking) whilst proposing increased funding to have more Council meetings and part of an Isle of Wight Council enforcement officer, the latter with no detail; the same enforcement officer service that Ryde Town Council seem to have defunded this year after paying for it last year. So the proposal made was not even a budget, definitely not real world.

Extract from the article:

Cllr Andre went on to state” “Sandown’s Blue Flag is now turning Central Beach into an extravagance with no evidence that having a Blue Flag boosts tourism”. The cost of providing lifeguard cover for a small section of Central Beach, just for 6 weeks, costed in the budget for 2023/24 at £31,400, together with associated costs such as the ongoing maintenance of the lifeguard hut place an additional burden on Sandown residents.

Mayors Response:

Sandown Town Council have been funding a lifeguard service since 2015. Obviously successive Councils have seen this as a worthwhile service and not an extravagance. I dare say that the three people who have been saved from drowning over the last two years will also disagree that it's an extravagance and certainly many of our residents have voiced support for its continuance. No evidence was supplied to evidence this statement that the service is an extravagance other than the opinion of two councillors

Extract from the article:

Cllr Andre continued with the statement "It was disappointing that no item was included in the public budget consultation on dealing with derelict buildings which I know is of great concern to local people. We tried to address this with provision for a planning enforcement officer

Mayors Response:

As Councillor Andre and Brothers well know, particularly for Cllr Andre as a cabinet member on the IOW Council, it is an Isle of Wight Council responsibility for planning enforcement. She was perfectly able to suggest items for inclusion on the public consultation but didn't. STC have not been asked this year to part fund an enforcement officer, no details of the service, cost, deliverables or performance management have been provided, so it is an un-scoped/uncosted idea only)

Extract from the article:

Cllr Andre continued "in relation to the derelict buildings, but other councillors failed to see the value in this".

Mayors Response:

This suggests they are content with the status quo. (Frankly, You ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself with that statement - My opinion) It is a very disingenuous statement against the other 10 councillors of the Council to suggest that they are happy with the state of derelict buildings. (a quick show of hands from councillors showed no agreement with this statement)

Extract from the article:

Cllr Andre continued; "From Cllr's Andre's motion to draw up a business case for a Post Office, which met with opposition from all other councillors, except Cllr Brothers, a public meeting will now be arranged to explore ways in which the local community can continue to access Post Office services".

Mayors Response:

The motion was opposed with good reason. When the Mayor presented the real implications/costs of running a Post office in the light of the real world experience of another Town Council, the Council did not want to take on the risk or cost of subsidise the running of a post office, so spending money on a business case was definitely not sensible or responsible. Again, this is an appalling misrepresentation of the facts.