

## Isle of Wight Councillors Report for July & August 2010

# Paul Fuller

**Independent Isle of Wight Councillor**

**for Cowes West and Gurnard.**

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### **Surgeries:**

I am happy to meet residents at their convenience, alternatively I hold surgeries on the following occasions:

**11-11.30am, Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July**, Little Gloster, Marsh Road, Gurnard.

**6-6:30pm, Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August**, Sports Bar, IW Community Club, Park Road, Cowes.

**11-11:30am, Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> August**, The Woodvale, Princes Esplanade, Gurnard.

**12-12:30pm, Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> August**, Little Gloster, Marsh Road, Gurnard.

**6-6:30pm Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September**, Northwood House, Ward Avenue, Cowes.

### **An end to Garden Grabbing?**

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, the Government announced new powers for councils to prevent inappropriate development on back gardens. Gardens will no longer be deemed 'brownfield sites', on a par with derelict or wasteland. Also noted is density targets will be scrapped, with gardens given green field status

The IW Council currently has between 20 and 30 applications, which are being revisited and at its last meeting two sites, which were 'to be approved' were overturned following introduction of the new Policy Statement.

Local builders and land agents has accused the Isle of Wight Council of acting overzealously.

### **Councillors Register of Financial and Other Interests.**

A few weeks ago an 'anonymous' request was made by a media/ press group to have access to all IW Councillors Register of Interests under Freedom of Information Powers.

As an Elected Member, I have never had a problem disclosing this information, and will be asking for this information to be made available via my portal on the IW Council's website.

## **Bus Services.**

I asked **Southern Vectis** to put on larger buses to cater for school users, following bus services filling up and not collecting passengers after leaving Rashley's in Park Road. This was been done on a temporary basis, whilst loading levels were high.

There will be no **Sail Bus** operating during Cowes Week this year, this is due to the IW Council receiving no income from parking in Northwood Park- which in previous years has helped to support this service. Next year, I will be asking that alternative measures are put in place by the Council to prepare for Cowes Week.

I've been approached by youngsters angry the Cabinet are looking at stopping the **Student Rider Concession** next week. I have received confirmation that **Service 30 to Newport via Rew Street** will cease to operate from September. This is due to a reduced take-up from passengers. Because Wightbus could not tender for this service following cutbacks, the bid submitted by Southern Vectis was considered to be too high to be cost-effective. It was further noted that since concessionary fares could only be used after 9:30am residents using their tickets tended to use local service 32, and then change services at the Horseshoe Inn, Northwood.

## **Children....Bored this Summer?**

See the IW Councils website for ideas: [www.wightchyps.org.uk](http://www.wightchyps.org.uk)

## **New School Update**

I attended the unveiling of plans for the new Secondary School, at a Public Exhibition held at Cowes High School. Plans will be consulted upon between 16<sup>th</sup> July and 8<sup>th</sup> August, and if approved work can start to take place in October. I intend leaflet-dropping to advise residents of the planning process.

The £30m school, featuring a roof top nature reserve is expected to be open by June 2012. The school will be environmentally friendly and be heated through a biomass plant.

Facilities at the school, which the community will also be able to access, include:

- \* An all-weather floodlight sports pitch
- \* A 650-seat conference centre/auditorium
- \* multi-use games areas
- \* green gym
- \* early years provision
- \* outdoors amphitheatre

The building will be 2 stories high, less intrusive than elements of the current site & educational facilities include:

- \* An central atrium that provides an inspirational learning environment
- \* A Library.....with books(!)
- \* External and external courtyards and spaces offering both social and learning areas
- \* A living science garden
- \* Music recording studio
- \* A working teaching-kitchen
- \* Rooftop conference area for staff, pupils and governors.

The current school will remain in use until the new build is completed and situated further to the west of the current site. Students will be consulted new designs for the school.

The Interim Governing Body appointed Jonathan Russell as Principal Designate from January 2011. Jonathan will work alongside current Headteacher, Dave Goodhead until he retires next year. With Cllr. Mazillius, I attended a community 'grilling' session, and was notably inspired by the new Principal. I understand also from students and staff who were similarly impressed by the Principal Designates motivation as leader for the new school, and look forward to witnessing the standards continuing to rise in the years ahead.

### **Meeting with the Head of Highways**

I met with the Head of Highways to discuss the progress of a number of projects for the Cowes & Gurnard Area.

I was advised that despite concerns being raised by myself, Gurnard Parish Council and the contractor a **temporary speed restriction** would not be implemented in **Rew Street**. Previous evidence showed that the Southern Water contractors did not speed, therefore would a 20mph be appropriate and if so would the police be content to enforce this?

Due to budgetary constraints, there is no money available to allow **Blackberry Lane** to be brought up to an adoptable standard (*I am investigating other means of Grant Funding, for this project!* ).

I did receive some good news. The **Winding Way light** will be repaired due to it not emitting enough light. **Service 32**, will remain safe for a further year, and **Baring Road** was recently surveyed for its new pavement.

Funding proves elusive within Highways, and I was given the sense the department had been hit harder than most because projects are not considered as 'essential' as some other council services. It should be noted cutbacks that have been implemented on the authority are instigated by all local members committed to keeping Council Tax at prudent levels, and not the staff who are in the frontline for taking the backlash for such cuts.

### **Briary Court.**

I will not be pursuing funding for a new bus shelter given concerns raised by some residents concerning perceived Crime and Disorder issues, should a shelter be erected.

### **Planning Application Update.**

The Planning Application for the Buildings and Installations connected with the Cross-Solent Gas Main, for Horn Hill, Rew Street is due to be heard by the IW Council's Planning Committee from **4pm, Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> July.**

If approved SGN will be looking to start work on the project in August, with most work completed before next summer.

Following meeting with the **Gurnard Pines** residents association, I used my delegated powers to sign off the **Activity Tower** for conditional approval on the basis that conditions were incorporated restricted hours of use.

A retrospective application was submitted for rooftop vents on a property in **Mornington Road**. Enforcement action is being followed-up with non-compliance of previous soft landscaping conditions.

### **Trees.**

I have spoken to the Tree Team concerning the status of a number of trees in the Cowes and Gurnard Area. I have been advised that the Council's Tree team are working alongside Pihl to protect trees on the new **Secondary School Site**. I understand from the Tree Officer that one of the more mature

trees may need to be removed due to the tree being diseased. If this proves necessary, the tree is scheduled to be replaced.

The Officer is due to visit **Gurnard Pines**, following complaints concerning the removal of trees.

Last month, I also had the opportunity to look at the **Tamarisk Tree** that was cut-back from Shore Path, although there is currently little left of this tree I am hoping to ensure the tree is protected in the future.

At June's Parish Council a suggestion was made to keep a 'log'(!) of **tree preservation orders** for the ward, when discussing this with the Tree Officer I was advised this (to a limited extent), had already been done with all TPO's being viewed by map form on the IW Council's Website for further information see [www.iwight.com/trees](http://www.iwight.com/trees)

### **Princes Esplanade Fountain.**

I have been contacted regarding the recent restoration of the Plaque and drinking fountain.

Funds were made available last year to restore the drinking fountain- however the funds which were contributed in partnership with Gurnard Parish Council did not extend as far as making the drinking fountain work as it did. I am investigating the cost of this, and so long as the cost is not too prohibitive looking at ways in how it can be restored properly.

### **Isle of Wight Health Profile 2010.**

Each year Health Profiles are produced by the Association of Public Health Observatories in partnership with the Department of Health and the NHS. The feedback returned for the Isle of Wight suggests:

- The Health of people living on the Isle of Wight is similar to that of England. Life expectancy and the rate of early death from heart disease and stroke are better than England averages.
- There are health inequalities within the Isle of Wight. Life expectancy for men in the most deprived areas is more than 4 years lower than for men from least deprived areas.
- Over the last 10 years, the rates of death from all cause, and the rate of early death from heart disease and stroke, have fallen. There are over 250 smoking related deaths each year.
- The rate of new cases of malignant melanoma skin cancer is higher than the England Average.
- GCSE achievement is lower than the England average. Breastfeeding initiation is high. Nearly 1 in 10 children in Reception year are classified as obese. The percentage of children who spend at least 3 hours a week on physical activity in school is higher than the England average.
- It is estimated that nearly 1 in 4 adults are obese and 1 in 5 smoke, similar to the England average. Smoking in pregnancy is high compared to the England average.
- Priorities for action identified in the Local Area Agreement for the Isle of Wight are: alcohol, smoking, obesity in children, teenage pregnancies, violent crime drugs and health inequalities.

Further information is available at [www.iow.nhs.uk](http://www.iow.nhs.uk)

### **Egypt House.**

I have contacted the Council concerning the unkempt condition of the pavement outside Egypt House on Egypt Esplanade. The paving has for many years been subject to looking worse for wear, and was hoping there might be opportunities to create a feature on this sad bit of paving which would enhance the area, rather than detract from it.

## Northwood House

On behalf of a number of residents, I was requested to ask a question to the Leader of the Council, in Cllr. Peter Bingham's absence, at Full Council.

The question asked, was as a result in the perceived less than transparent way the transfer took place between Northwood House from the IW Council to the Northwood House Trustees.

The Question asked was as follows: *"How, when and by whom was the decision made to withdraw from Northwood House, where are the minutes of the meeting at which this decision was made and how can elected members of this authority obtain minutes of such meetings?"* This was followed by the supplementary question: *"By what process can both members of this authority and the wider authority hold such decisions to account?"*

Councillor Pugh's response was as follows: *"Northwood House Trust is a registered charity. The legal position is that the managing trustees are responsible for the maintenance and management of Northwood House and its grounds, not the Council. Discussions between the trustees and the Council about their role have been taking place over the last 2 or 3 years with a view to the Trustees taking on their full responsibilities.*

*In April a management decision was taken by officers, under their delegated powers and in consultation with me, to seek a new location for the registrars to operate from. There are therefore no meeting minutes. The trustees have been informed that the Council will if they wish, continue to manage the car park and maintain the grounds on their behalf, if they wish us to do so and agree to reimburse us for doing so from the income they receive from Ward Avenue Car Park. This would effectively continue with the previous arrangements for the car park and grounds maintenance, but be clearer and more accountable an arrangement.*

*The Director of Corporate Services will be meeting with the trustees to discuss this on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. This meeting was put back from an earlier date at the request of the trustees. Officers have also used their delegated powers, again in consultation with me, to agree to make a 20% £2,500 contribution to the cost of a feasibility study to consider possible future sustainable and self funding uses for the house & grounds. English Heritage are paying 80%. This shows the Council is continuing to support the trustees in seeking to secure a future of the house".*

To the supplementary, Cllr Pugh responded *"As you are quite properly doing, by asking these questions".*

## In the Last Month:

I have dealt with a handful of complaints concerning the **new pavement** between Crossfield Avenue and Baring Road, I complained to the Planners concerning tight timescales for **signing-off planning applications** during busy periods. With planners, and residents I have undertaken four site visits, have met with Planning Officers to progress these will be meeting with officers to discuss recent increases in **Licensing Applications**. I attended a meeting with the **Police & Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators**, attended a residents meeting with **Gurnard Pines residents**, attended a further meeting of **Cowes Design Statement Committee** plus a recent public meeting discussing with residents progress of the **Replacement Gas Main**. I am contending with policy issues in enforcing **overnight parking** and **General Parking issues** on Queens Road, and looking into **Car Parking Options** to saving the IW Council money.

I've assisted in a successful **Parking Ticket Appeal**, attended presentations and training opportunities on the new **Planning Policy Statement 3**, referred to earlier in my report, been 'trained' on **Promoting the Rural Economy**, unravelled the IW Council's **Transformation Agenda** and have attended a presentation concerning the **School Reorganisation Timetable**. I understand from the new academic year, holidays will be more in-line with authorities on the mainland.

I responded positively to Andrew Turner's campaign not to share **Island MP's** with 'England', sorry the mainland. However, I'm still of the view that following years of under-representation the Island deserves 2 MP's, not 1 (which Andrew's suggests) or 1½ (which the Government suggests). Why not have more MP's, representing smaller communities, earning less money?

The highlight of last month was being invited by Cllrs Wells and McGregor from Cowes Town Council to the official launch of the new children's play area at **Northwood Recreation Ground**, I will be returning back (with my children!) to test the Play Area in closer detail!! On a recent ward walk I requested that **dog mess** was cleared from Gurnard Beach, Princes Esplanade and Park Road.

I have also started work on constructing my own 'self-indulgent' **Councillor's Blog**. At the moment it isn't very good, but given time I hope it might be. It will also provide Town and Parish Councillors to give me a hard time, when I haven't chased matters up that I promised I would!; I hope it will provide Town Councillors with an insight into what I've been doing before arriving late to meetings with a bundle of my monthly newsletters, which for the time-being will continue to feature on the Gurnard Parish Council Website. Please feel free to visit my blog at: [www.paulfullercc.blogspot.com](http://www.paulfullercc.blogspot.com)