



ISLE OF WIGHT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

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Draft - minutes IWALC Executive Meeting 28th May 2026 at The Riverside Centre,
Newport Isle of Wight and via Zoom - commenced 7pm

Present:

Cllr Patricia Redpath (Chair), Cllr Susan Hardy (Treasurer) and Brian Jennings (County Officer),

Members:

Cllr Bob Blezzard (Newchurch), Cllr Nick Stuart (Brighstone), Cllr Cheryl Fontana (Fishbourne), Cllr Ian Boyd (Sandown), Cllr Mick Lyons (Havenstreet & Ashey), Cllr Steve Dyer (St Helens), Cllr Steph Toogood (Ventnor), Cllr Penny Acton (Gurnard), Cllr Diana Conyers (Ryde), and Cllr Jon Ellis (Brading).

1. Welcome

Cllr Repath (IWALC - Vice Chair) chaired the meeting in the absence of Cllr Cooper who was unable to attend and welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Cllr Vivian Roberts, Cllr Bill Freshwater, Cllr Vix Lowthion, Cllr Julia Laursen, Cllr Jane Timbrell, Cllr Jonathan Hill, Cllr Steve Cooper and Mrs Jacky Matthews.

3. Minutes

Cllr Blezzard proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th March 2026 be accepted as an accurate record of the proceedings; this was seconded and supported by a show of hands.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer (Cllr Sue Hardy) had submitted a bi-monthly finance report and explained that all IWALC subscriptions had now been paid. There was a question raised about a £24 expenditure – it was explained that this was for two year's membership to IWBRUG (IOW Bus & Rail Users Group) a forum for relevant bodies to engage with Southern Vectis and Island Line.

5. Chair's Report

N/A (Cllr Cooper was unavailable).

6. County Officer's Report

The CO opened their report by extending a warm thank you to everyone who had attended the previous month's topic meetings, noting it was fantastic to see such a strong turnout and active engagement across the sessions.

Meeting Highlights & Thanks

'We the 33' & Biosphere Update: Sincere thanks were extended to Lucy from We the 33 for updating IWALC about their aims and to Cllr Boyd for providing a fascinating and highly informative update on the Isle of Wight's Biosphere designation. It was noted that this provided excellent context on how the unique local environment integrated with council initiatives across the Island.

Investing Wisely: Gratitude was expressed to Jamie Charters from CCLA for hosting the 'Investing Wisely' session. The guidance provided on managing public funds responsibly and navigating financial landscapes was noted as incredibly valuable for all in attendance.

Collaborative Spirit

The report highlighted that one of IWALC's greatest strengths was the willingness of its members to support one another. Personal gratitude was expressed to everyone who regularly took the time to share solutions and advice when queries were raised.

A special mention was given to the Clerking team at Sandown Town Council, who had generously worked alongside a fellow member council to review and guide them through their end-of-year submissions. It was noted that this kind of cross-council mentorship perfectly exemplified the collaborative spirit of local councils on the Island.

Upcoming Events & Training

Members were reminded to ensure the following key dates for June were marked in their diaries:

New & Refresher Councillor Training (Essential for both newly elected members and those looking for a governance top-up)

Date: Saturday 13th June 2026

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: The Riverside Centre, Newport

June Topic Meeting: Isle of Wight Ramblers (An interactive session focused on local

rights of way, walking networks, and countryside access)

Date: Thursday 18th June 2026

Platform: Zoom (Joining links to be circulated closer to the date)

The report concluded with a vote of thanks to all members for their continued dedication to their communities and their ongoing support of the association.

7. Pre-election Period

Ryde Town Council has always removed public questions and member questions from their meeting agendas during the pre-election period, but some councillors challenged the need for this during the recent pre-election period. Cllr Conyers was keen to understand how other councils approach meetings in the Pre-election period.

The challenges of managing the pre-election period for town and parish councils were discussed, particularly in light of recent experiences where council business had been used to promote candidates on social media as well as during meetings. Concern was expressed regarding a specific instance where a councillor announced a traffic scheme approval at a parish council meeting and subsequently promoted it on social media during the election period. It was noted that while Local Government Association (LGA) policies exist to guide councils on appropriate behaviour during elections, the implementation and enforcement of these guidelines remain unclear, especially regarding social media usage.

It was noted that current behaviour now differs significantly from what was anticipated when those documents were originally drafted. A proposal was made to seek advice on appropriate responses for handling social media and public questions, particularly to avoid any perceptions of impropriety.

The group also discussed the operational differences between larger and smaller parish councils in managing such issues, noting that smaller councils might not face the same intensity of challenges in this area. The County Officer will request clear guidance from NALC on Council procedures and Councillor behaviour in meetings and on social media in the pre-election period.

8. Future IWALC/IOWC Working Relationship

At the start of the discourse, it was reported that IWALC had lost its representation on the IOWC Planning Committee, a development noted as disappointing given the valuable insights gained from previous involvement.

Cllr Boyd then gave an update on a potential new stewardship model (for the IOWC working with town and parish councils) regarding land and building management that was then discussed. This model would involve creating an inventory of assets and evaluating their potential for attracting civic and service support. The plan includes testing various

approaches to asset management through pilot parishes, with potential frameworks including shared resources, head leases, and alternative tenure arrangements.

Challenges regarding public facility management and licensing were raised, noting that a stewardship approach had been considered to make processes more accessible for community and touring groups alike. Concerns were expressed regarding the sometimes, challenging relationship between the principal council and local councils, specifically citing issues with senior officer engagement and constitutional dynamics.

Recent Isle of Wight Council meetings were critiqued, including a lengthy and disorganised AGM, and questions were raised regarding the effectiveness of proposed bureaucratic changes. Additionally, clarification was sought regarding the council's authority to approve a parish's request to become a town council, citing legislation that indicates principal authority approval is not required for such changes.

Serious concerns were raised regarding recent council decisions, particularly the removal of representation from planning and the introduction of constitutional changes without proper consultation.

Discussions took place regarding the challenges of working across various parish councils, highlighting issues around asset management, resource disparities, and cooperation frameworks. The need for clearer expectations and improved communication between different-sized parishes was emphasised, with a suggestion that clusters of parishes could work together more effectively. While some parishes demonstrate a strong willingness to collaborate, it was noted that others have not yet seen the advantages of cooperation, suggesting that recommendations to the IOWC might eventually be necessary to address these disparities for those councils that cannot see the benefit of clustering.

The group discussed inviting the council leader, Cllr Jonathan Bacon, and Mrs Wendy Perera (CEO - IOWC) to address a future meeting, potentially the IWALC AGM, to assess their commitment to the ongoing aim of strengthening the working relationship of IWALC and the IOWC. It was agreed that it would be beneficial if attendees could prepare questions in advance to ensure a focused and productive discussion.

9. Business Action Plan Production

The meeting considered the offer of a Business Action Plan production workshop for IWALC member councils. It would be hosted by the CEO of ESALC/WSALC Trevor Leggo. This was received positively with interest expressed in pursuing this in the autumn.

10. Reports from Outside Bodies

- **IWBRUG:** Cllr Conyers had already circulated and update from the user group.

- **National Assembly:** Cllr Bob Blezzard explained that the next NALC Assembly will be in person on the 30th June and if he is re-elected as IWALC representative will attend. Cllr Blezzard also brought the Project Keystone survey to members' attention – NALC have created it so that they can ascertain everyone's thoughts about the future direction of NALC.
- **NALC Climate Emergency Network:** Cllr Penny Acton reported that the Climate Emergency Network was an excellent source of information and a first rate forum to share ideas and encouraged members to be on the lookout for the many networks/forums that NALC run, as they are extremely valuable,

The members were thanked for their submissions, and there were no further comments.

9. Close of Meeting

With there being no further business, the meeting was declared closed at 8.02pm.