

Minutes of a meeting of the 114th **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY** of the Local Electors of the Parish of Crowborough held at the United Church, Croft Road, Crowborough on Wednesday 25th April 2018 at 7.30pm

Town Councillors Present:

Peter Ellefsen	David Neeves
Martyn Garrett	Ron Reed*
Richard Jury	Wendy Scrace
Chris Moss	Matthew Street
George Moss	Sandra Timms
Kay Moss*	Neil Waller*

*Denotes those also WDC Councillors

In attendance:

WDC Councillors: Philip Lunn Jeannette Towey

ESCC Councillors: Sylvia Tidy Richard Stogdon

Caroline Miles Deputy Town Clerk
Amanda Negus Committee Clerk

78 members of the public

Crowborough Town, Wealden District and East Sussex County Councillors held 'surgery time' to enable Crowborough residents to ask them questions individually.

The Town Mayor, Cllr Peter Ellefsen welcomed all those present and introduced Bob Bailey.

BOB BAILEY CHAIRMAN OF MRS de LANNOY AND HAVEN HOMES ALMSHOUSE CHARITY

Almshouses stem from the Middle Ages when many started out as hospitals. Almshouses are homes for life for people in need and because of the recent shortage of affordable homes the demand for almshouses is growing.

Historically there were two almshouse charities in Crowborough; Mrs de Lannoy and Haven. Mrs de Lannoy has had an almshouse in Beacon Road since 1874. This house was most recently refurbished in 2013. Haven has had almshouses in East Beeches Road and Beeches Road since 1905 and 1908. The Haven almshouses have been completely refurbished and all have their own kitchens, making them into small modern flats. They had 15 units between them.

In 2013 consideration started to be given to a new almshouse. Wealden District Council suggested the opportunity of the affordable home behind the old Plough and Horses. The situation they were faced with was two separate charities, both with money but not sufficient funds to buy the property. They decided to merge, but it wasn't straightforward.

Both charities had different fundamental criteria; Mrs de Lannoy provided homes predominantly for women. Couples could be accepted, but if the wife died the husband had to move out. Whereas Haven could take older men and women.

The merged charity is managed by a group of voluntary trustees, it's run like a business but overseen by the charities commission. The Almshouse Association also have an interest in what the charity is doing.

The new house was built for the purpose of the charity, providing four units. It has a nice garden, a bus stop outside and parking spaces. The units are spacious enough for couples. The first residents have now moved in.

In answer to questions Bob Bailey explained that one side of the Trust allocates accommodation to residents of Crowborough and the other side allocates from five local parishes. When deciding who to choose, prospective residents have to provide references and are interviewed. There is currently a waiting list of three.

It is difficult to raise the money needed, but it is also difficult to find suitable Trustees.

MAYORS CHARITY – FRIENDS OF CROWBOROUGH HOSPITAL (FOCH)

Cllr Peter Ellefsen presented Dr Cathryn Stokes, the President of the Friends of Crowborough Hospital with a cheque for £4,350.59 and explained some of the work the charity does:

- Funded a new digital scanner for the x-ray department, which enables remote viewing by consultants.
- Bought a minibus for the Social Day Centre.
- Subsidise and run the Social Day Centre.
- Awarded a bursary to a nurse trainee.
- Specialist armchairs for the ward.
- Funded an emergency Patient trolley.
- Provide toys for children in the minor injury unit.
- Run the hospital fete.

FOCH have won the National Innovation Award of the Community Hospitals Association.

Dr Cathryn Stokes thanked the Mayor for choosing the 'Friends' as his charity. She announced that the FOCH have been presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service for more than 60 years of service, this is the equivalent to an MBE.

FOCH currently have a larger mini bus and a smaller wheelchair vehicle, which are used to transport clients to and from the Social Day Service. The donation will go towards replacing the wheelchair bus with a medium size vehicle as the current one is 15 years old.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

CTC Cllr Quentin Burch
CTC Cllr Alan Penney
CTC Cllr Greg Rose
WDC Cllr Stephen Isted

TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12th APRIL 2017

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th April 2017 were approved and signed.

TO RECEIVE THE RECORD OF ATTENDANCES OF TOWN COUNCILLORS FROM MAY 2017

The record of attendances of Town Councillors to meetings of the Council and its committees was received by the meeting.

TO NOTE THE RECEIPT OF REPORTS OF TRUSTEES/GROUPS WITH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

The following reports were received by the meeting:

Annual Rail Report
Crowborough Fairtrade

TO NOTE THE RECEIPT OF THE TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

The Town Mayor's Report was received by the meeting.

TO NOTE THE RECEIPT OF REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

The following reports were received by the meeting:

Finance and General Purposes
Sport, Recreation and Cemetery
Planning and Development
Communication and Events
Environment

OPEN FORUM

A member of the Crowborough Community Association (CCA) raised the subject of the Wealden District Council (WDC) Planning North meeting at Hailsham regarding the Mead House car park planning application for 68 dwellings. He explained his concerns of the impact of this planning approval on the future sustainability of the community centre and the town centre as a whole.

He thanked East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Cllrs Sylvia Tidy and Richard Stogdon who are still battling away on behalf of Crowborough. He thanked WDC Cllrs Greg Rose and Philip Lunn for their joint statement presented at the planning meeting for a compromise proposal. He thanked WDC Cllr Stephen Isted for his forthright comments against the proposal.

A resident asked Crowborough Town Council (CTC) what they consider to be the most important issue in Crowborough at the moment and what they doing about it.

- The Chairman of the Sport, Recreation and Cemetery committee answered that the new cemetery with natural burial area is extremely important for the Town as space is running out at Herne Cemetery. She is pleased that progress is being made.
- The Chairman of the Pine Grove Working Group (PGWG) explained that the Pine Grove business hub is the biggest project CTC is dealing with. A number of councillors are spending a lot of time working on it. Basepoint deliver short term leases for small businesses and Regus have a similar business model. Regus have now taken over Basepoint, so changes to the lease between CTC and Regus are having to be made because of corporate wording requirements. The last few weeks have been spent working on this. There are no changes in principal with future tenants. The PGWG and CCA have agreed access to community centre land whilst works are carried out. The PGWG are hoping to sign contracts with Regus mid May.

A resident raised the point again about the lack of disabled and pram access at Crowborough Railway Station, as this issue has not been rectified since he raised it at last year's Town Conference. He also queried why it had not been addressed in the Annual Railway Report.

A resident asked how the Community Warden is getting on and how effective he is. Several residents commented that he wasn't always visible. The Vice Chairman of the Environment Committee advised that the Community Warden has completed the training for accreditation and the application is in process. Once fully completed he will have powers to issue certain fixed penalty notices, but this will not include parking. The Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee commented that the best function of the PCSO's had been by keeping an ear to the ground and the Community Warden is fulfilling this role. It is hoped his presence will deter the vandalism that is plaguing the Town recently. It is early days, but a good start has been made and his effectiveness is being monitored. Another resident commented that the Community Warden had provided a visible presence and therefore deterrent in her Mother's road where youths had been throwing bottles and causing disruption. Her Mother now feels a lot safer.

A resident asked why the Town Clerk was not at the Town Conference. It was explained that the Town Conference is a Parish meeting and not a Council meeting. There is no obligation for Councillors or staff to attend, therefore there is not a requirement for the Town Clerk to be present. If the Chairman of the Council is present then he must chair the meeting. There is a requirement for minutes of the meeting to be recorded, but again, no obligation for the Council to provide someone to do so.

The CCA member returned to the subject of the Mead House car park planning application and asked for the WDC councillors who represent Crowborough and Crowborough Town Councillors to declare whether they individually support the ESCC Councillors campaign and what their stance on the loss of car parking spaces is.

All Councillors who were in a position to voice an opinion disagreed with the plan to build on the entire car park and would favour a review and/or compromise proposal. As much as they would like to be involved with every cause, they have to select what they are able to champion as well as continue with their day jobs.

Another member of the CCA confirmed that CTC were supportive in their objections when the application came before CTC's Planning & Development Committee. He pointed out that the Mead House car park will be the fourth Crowborough car park that WDC has sold.

WDC Cllr Neil Waller was directly asked why he was unable to stay in the WDC Planning North meeting and why he couldn't vote. He explained he has a prejudicial interest in the application because he is a Director of Sussex Weald Homes Ltd. This company is trying to purchase land from WDC and the result of this transaction was contingent on the result of Mead House application. He acted according to the Councillors Code of Conduct.

Several residents asked how it was possible for WDC to make an unbiased decision on an application that they have a financial interest in. Councillors confirmed that it is legal, although hard to understand. The Councillors don't benefit personally and have to make difficult decisions on behalf of the Council they represent.

A resident raised the point that ESCC have spent £2.5 million redeveloping Uckfield town centre, £3.8 million on the centre of Hailsham and suggested it was time they spent money on Crowborough perhaps by buying the Mead House car park for the Town. It was pointed out that a number of years ago CTC was in consultation with ESCC about the redevelopment of Crowborough town centre with various options including pedestrianising the High Street. Following a public display residents voted not to do anything.

A resident thanked the CTC Environment Warden for her litter picking and a round of applause ensued.

A resident commented that from the 1st July 2019 there will be a charge for the collection of brown bins and he felt this could increase the dumping of rubbish particularly in recreation grounds. He asked if any provision has been made for this eventuality. No provision has currently been made, but fly-tipping is against the law and it will be addressed as and when necessary.

The meeting closed at 9.32pm.