

Crowborough News

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TOWN CONFERENCE EDITION



A message from the Mayor

My second year as Mayor has been interesting, with the opportunity to meet so many more of the residents, and discuss the issues the town faces.

It has also been very busy with the Full Council meetings every two months and the five committees which meet between the main Council meetings.

With the elections last May came new Councillors, who have had to very quickly come to terms with how the council works and its responsibilities. We now have more women Councillors, which I believe gives a more balanced view during the debates.

The events arranged by the Council were again affected by the weather with heavy rain during the firework display. I must thank all the people who did brave the weather and watched the display. Those attending would have noticed that I had a problem lighting the beacon due to wet matches and lighter, but we succeeded in the end, after several attempts and the display could start.

Fortunately the weather was on our side for the Summer Fair and the Christmas event.

The Summer Fair was well attended and we saw some new attractions including a performer who enjoyed playing with fire.

The Christmas event was very well attended and everyone enjoyed the street entertainers and colourful stalls. The annual switching on of the Christmas lights again turned our high street into an illuminated Christmas scene and the TV star who turned them on was mobbed by the children for autographs.

This is by far my favourite event, as it gives me two hours to meet and greet the residents in a relaxed atmosphere and to join in the fun.

I also attended a number of carol services both in Crowborough and neighbouring towns which are always happy occasions.

Unfortunately for me I attended the Bonfire Society carol service in Uckfield and was not informed that I was expected to sing a duet with the Mayor of Uckfield. For someone who cannot sing a note, I tried but it was not very melodic.

However not all the Mayors engagements are enjoyable and the annual Remembrance Day is a very solemn event. Again this year I found it very emotional to lay a wreath on behalf of Crowborough and to remember all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

It was also sad to say goodbye to Canon Cornes, who has retired after many years as the Vicar of All Saints. Canon Cornes was the Mayor's Pastor and we had many interesting

Town Mayor's Message continued...

discussions. I hope he enjoys his new life in Eastbourne.

On a happier note I was invited again this year to visit the Scouts and Air Cadets, who achieve so much with the young people of our town. The dedicated volunteers, who give their time to train our youth in skills, which will help them in later life, are to be applauded.

Last year a proposal was made that the Council should give a grant to the Scouts to purchase new camping equipment. This was approved and during my last visit to them they proudly displayed their new tents.

Also during my visit the Scouts informed me of the problems they have on finding suitable fields to carry out various training activities and how they had to travel to find anywhere suitable.

Since then a proposal has been accepted by the Council to allow them access to the Council owned land at Palesgate Lane.

During the year I have had various engagements as Mayor including the unveiling of a new roller for the Bowls Club, opening a Care home and opening the revamped Post Office.

I also attended the annual nativity play and a play entitled Porridge at St John's CE Primary School, which were both very memorable.

I would like to thank all these and the other organisations for inviting me to attend their various events.

This year will mark the 50th anniversary of twinning between Crowborough and Montargis, and in May they will be visiting Crowborough to resign a charter document.

I would like to thank all the members of the twinning society for the work they have done in arranging the various events which are planned for the visit.

One of my two charities this year is again the High Weald Dementia Social Group, who help families who are caring for relatives with Dementia. I have been fortunate to be invited to their outings and events again, which give the carers some respite.

I must again praise the volunteers who give their time to helping carers with advice and sympathy.

My other charity is the Jarvis Brook Community Group, who are raising funds to build a Community centre. They are pushing forward with their plans and hopefully the money raised by the Town Council will help them.

During the year I have attended meetings with the Chairman of Wealden District Council and the other Mayors and Council Leaders of East Sussex towns, to discuss issues that affect us. We are all suffering with the spending cuts and the changes proposed by the County Council and Police will affect us the most.

Crowborough is a safe and healthy place to live and we must fight to keep it that way, for us and the next generation.

Finally I would like to thank the Town Council staff for their hard work and commitment in the efficient running of the Council.

Also thanks to my wife Lyn for all her support and understanding during another busy year for me as Mayor.

Cllr Ron Reed

Planning and Development Committee Report

Crowborough Town Council is a statutory consultee for planning applications within the Parish, and accordingly the Planning and Development Committee meets every three weeks to discuss and respond to all such applications.

Wealden District Council's planning policies are in a state of continuing development. The Strategic Sites Local Plan was suddenly withdrawn by WDC in May 2015 and is to be replaced by the "Wealden Local Plan" which was presented for public consultation in October 2015. In July 2015, The Court of Appeal struck out part of one of the Core Strategy policies - the need for any additional building within 7km of the Ashdown Forest to be mitigated by the provision of SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space). WDC now considers planning applications within 15km of the Ashdown Forest on a case-by-case basis, allowing visitor impact to be mitigated by a financial contribution to a SANGS fund, and still preventing development if it will increase nitrogen deposition on the Forest.

In the past year, since the removal of that 7km restriction, we are seeing an increase in the number of applications for house extensions,

but still very few for new builds.

The Walshes Road development of 160 houses was granted Planning Permission in December 2015. The Steel Cross development of 103 houses was refused by WDC, the refusal overturned by the Planning Inspectorate in July 2015, but at the High Court in February 2016, the refusal was upheld, so there remain well over 100 houses still to be built somewhere in Crowborough to meet the expected target allocation of 300 within the new Wealden Local Plan, once it is adopted.

The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Crowborough, which was started in 2014, unfortunately lacked sufficient support from Crowborough residents, lost momentum, and in January 2016 it was agreed that work on it would cease. The Town Council is trying to ensure that the work done on it is not wasted and can be used in a revised "Vision" document.

I am extremely grateful to the members of the committee who spend a huge amount of time prior to our committee meetings, scrutinising applications along with other planning-related documents and policies.

Cllr Peter Ellefsen

Environment Committee Report

The Environment Committee continues to work for the good of Crowborough and aims to accomplish as much as possible despite its budget being cut to the bone and the impact of Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council budget cuts. The public regularly ask us for extra dog bins, litter bins and traffic calming measures, these come with an initial outlay and then an ongoing cost e.g. emptying bins or part funding for larger road improvement projects. ESCC and WDC are now referring residents to the Town Council when they themselves cannot meet the demands and Councillors in all levels of authorities are continually frustrated that they

are powerless to further the projects which they recognise are important to the residents in their respective areas.

This year we have seven new councillors on the Environment committee and I thank them and the long standing members for their input especially into the "I Care for Crowborough" week. The representation at outside meetings and reports to the committee are crucial in helping the Committee in its decision making.

I thank Philippa Hewes and her staff for the efficient and helpful way that they have kept up with the workload generated from this Committee.

Environment Committee Report continued...

A big thank you to David Foot and best wishes on his retirement.

Our aim is to keep Crowborough a clean, safe and attractive town in which to live.

PLANTING



The planting this year was considered by many residents to be exceptional

and the Town Council has received many thanks for the pleasure the flowers have brought them. The winter planting included planting the anniversary bed to celebrate the centenary of the WI and there has been a request to summer plant to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the twinning with Montargis.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS

Highway Issues

East Sussex County Council no longer fully fund projects put forward by Parishes and Town Councils. Any project that meets ESCC criteria will be put on list to be part funded by ESCC and the balance of the cost has to be sourced by Parishes and Town Councils, even then the project may not be high enough on the list to go ahead. ESCC Local Transport Plan 2016/7- 2020/21 sets out all new proposals and there is very little specifically for Crowborough.

The improvement to the lighting at Jarvis Brook is now completed. A revised scheme has been installed at Crowborough Cross Traffic Lights to incorporate a right turn filter in the High Street and an intelligence system able to alter timing of the lights according to traffic levels.

Community Transport

I once again genuinely extend my gratitude to John Coleman who has continued to be the Town Council's representative for transport. The fact that he attends meetings on the Town Council's behalf and gives a very knowledgeable report to the Environment Committee on the ever changing rail system and the ever diminishing bus services is a huge and invaluable help.

His full reports can be read on the Town Council website. One item of local interest is the lengthening of Crowborough Station platform to accommodate extra carriages.

NORTH WEALD COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP LTD

Wealdlink Bus Service

The Town Council is a major contributor to the funding of Wealdlink Bus Service.

Wealdlink are always looking at how they can offer new services to the community in a bid to keep funds coming in. They were successful in winning the contract for the 226 service and other services. They have now recruited two extra drivers and passenger numbers and fare income has risen on incoming shopping services. However the numbers using the supported bus services have grown but most fares are concessionary pass holders so little income is generated. Funding continues to be a major problem for a very good service that brings people into the town.

They have a very informative website.

Environment Warden

The Environment Warden's task in clearing up litter has reached a point where she needs assistance in the summer to clear up the huge amount of litter. I would ask everybody to use the litter bins provided or take your litter home.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

We ran an "I CARE FOR CROWBOROUGH" week in September which was great fun. The event was aimed at highlighting litter and encroachment and to generate a pride in the community by encouraging residents to take responsibility for their own environment. The week was deemed very successful with an event being put on every day and including holding neighbourhood clean-up parties on the Saturday. It was great to see the schools participating and the photos on our website told the story.

POLICE

We have regular reports from Sgt Mike Keeler. Crowborough is one of 200 councils which form the Sussex CCTV Partnership run by Sussex Police and based in Lewes.

Environment Committee Report continued...

We have decided to renew our contract for another five years as our cameras are relatively new and will be essential with the declining Police presence.

PCSO

PCSO Chris Harrison will no longer be sponsored by the Town Council due to the reorganisation in the way Policing is carried out. We are sorry to have to say goodbye to him and thank him and all the PCSO's who have made a huge difference with their presence in Crowborough. I wish them the all the best in their new roles.

It is likely that there will be fewer PCSO's from April and they will be less territorial and have a different role, any other changes could take place in July 2016.

It has been suggested at Policing meetings that the Towns and Parishes might want to engage a Community Warden, this has many implications and is still under discussion.

STREET LIGHTING

Only minor work has been carried out on the Town Council's Street lights.

COUNTRY PARK, GHYLL, PALES GATE LANE AND BLUEBELL WOOD

Our new Ranger Daniel has worked for the council for the past year and has made good progress in integrating himself into the

community with whom he hopes to engage in future environmental projects.

The five year plan for the Ghyll has been up dated and the work on controlling invasive species and management of all three sites continues. Encroachment by householders is still an issue and boundary markers will be installed.

Motor cycling in the Ghyll is problematic because it degrades the environment and is dangerous. Installation of barriers is being considered.

Palesgate Lane was the home to Exmoor ponies for a few weeks this summer and their grazing contributed to the management of a site that is both difficult and costly to maintain. We look forward to having them back next year.

Cllr Sandra Timms



Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

Annual report for the year to 31st March 2016

This year has been dominated by the ongoing saga of the acquisition of the "Package of 3", Pine Grove, together with the freehold of the Community Centre and the Bluebell Wood. If you recall we went out to consultation to seek and obtain your approval. At the time of writing this we still have not completed, in fact not even exchanged contracts, but we remain optimistic that this severe test of stamina and patience will eventually prevail. The offer we made to Wealden District Council has not changed during this time and Wealden finally accepted our original offer in October 2015. Subsequently the delay has been down to the

"devil in the detail" of the legal clauses and Wealden's changing demands introducing new concepts to many of us like "Overage" and "Long Stops". We also decided to obtain a D1 use for part of the building so that we could potentially rent out space for activities like a crèche or hairdresser – anything that involved public visitors – similar to the existing library. Even that has not been straightforward and there is some confusion of what Wealden themselves operated under during their time at Pine Grove.

You will vividly recall that last year we increased your council tax to pay for the loan repayment on a 20 year annuity basis. So we

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report continued...

have that first year's money in the bank.

Our balanced budget for 16/17 means that there is no increase in your council tax that relates to the Town for this coming year, although other tiers of councils and bodies are having to do so. So, like last year this report is written with unknowns which may be clearer by the time I speak to you at the Annual Conference.

Onto other matters. Importantly our internal and external audits were again passed without any adverse comment, which should reassure you all that your money is in safe hands and is properly administered and accounted for. Thanks to the excellent Council staff for their professionalism and diligence, we continue to have a very cautious investment policy and whilst the interest is miniscule the money is safe. The largest investment we have made this year is at Summersales where we have invested in the infrastructure for the new burial ground ahead of when Herne becomes full.

We also reviewed our Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and our Risk Management. The grants were £52,000 this year and again the two major recipients were the CAB and Clued Up, which I know you all value highly. Others this year included the Crowborough Darby & Joan Club, Wolfe Bowling Club, St. Johns Preschool, Crowborough Arts, Beacon Swimming Club, Ditch the Slippers, Crowborough & District Angling Association, Crowborough Bonfire & Carnival Society, Jarvis Brook Community Centre and Home Start.

So overall it has been quite a frustrating year in many ways and although the Neighbourhood Plan was discontinued basically through the difficulty in engaging with Crowborough residents we are developing our own Business Plan, which we will share with you, of what we want to achieve over the lifetime of this council, the next three years.

Cllr Quentin Burch

Communications and Events Committee Report

Crowborough and Horwich made history in 1990 by becoming the first two towns in the country to twin and our first event in 2015 saw the Mayors of Crowborough and Horwich cementing the special relationship by signing a 25th anniversary charter.

2015 was the year in which we commemorated the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta. Pupils from Ashdown Primary School re-enacted the sealing of the document at the town's Sussex Day celebration on Chapel Green. Although we had inclement weather for the evening it was lovely to see so many families turn up to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere and free entertainment on offer. This year we will be holding a dog show at 6.30pm so be sure to bring your dog along. Registration for the dog show will be from 6.00pm.

The 'Great Crowborough Cake Off' made its debut at the Summer Fair with The Society of the Friends of Montargis winning the first 'Great Crowborough Cake Off' 2016 cup. It



was great fun for the audience and thanks must go to 1414 Squadron, Crowborough Vale W.I. and our ground staff who entered into the

spirit of the competition and came up with some imaginatively decorated cakes.

After years of perfect weather for our firework displays November 5th arrived with torrential rain and strong winds. The driving rain got progressively worse as the evening drew in. A decision was made to go ahead with the event with the only concession to the weather being to pull the Goodnight Crowborough finale, as the gales and heavy rain had rendered the lance work unsafe. Crowborough residents are made of stern stuff and thousands came along to enjoy another spectacular firework display.

Our Christmas event continues to go from

Communications and Events Committee Report continued...

strength to strength. Although we were dismayed to see the forecast was for heavy rain again it thankfully held off until well after the event had finished. Thousands once again turned up to enjoy the festivities



and street entertainment. Dani Harmer, of television Tracey Beaker fame, has been the most popular celebrity yet to turn on our

Christmas Lights. Dani signed autographs and had her photograph taken well after the event had finished.

We always have many compliments about our Christmas lights and this year was no exception. We are fortunate that our Christmas tree is donated to us every year but we are limited to the size of the tree as it needs to be transported by our ground staff. The Communication and Events Committee will be looking at whether we should continue with this arrangement or whether to purchase a tree for the Piazza.

The Town's vintage fire engine, Frank Humphry, is currently housed for all to see at Bentley Motor Museum. There has been recent discussion as to whether now would be the time to sell the vehicle as opposed to paying a small rent to have it housed at the museum. After impassioned pleas from members of the public and subsequent debate it was agreed that we would investigate the cost of getting the engine mobile so that we could use it at local events

and other community occasions.

Alongside our usual events for 2016 we are delighted that Crowborough will be involved in a unique project to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday. On Thursday 21st April a succession of beacons will be lit across the United Kingdom. Crowborough will be taking part by lighting the Crowborough beacon at the designated time of 7.30pm. Please come and raise a glass to wish our Monarch a very happy 90th birthday.

I could not end this report without mentioning Andrew Lyon who very sadly passed away this year. Andrew very kindly took photographs on behalf of the council at our outdoor events. In torrential rain or in searing summer sunshine Andrew always managed to get a great pictorial record of the event. He will be sorely missed.

Cllr Matthew Street

DIARY OF EVENTS 2016

1st May 2016 - Boundary Walk

16th June 2016 - Sussex Day

25th June 2016 - Armed Forces Day, Flag Flying Ceremony

9th July 2016 - Summer Fair

5th Nov 2016 - Firework Display

11th Nov 2016 - Armistice Day

13th Nov 2016 - Remembrance Sunday

25th Nov 2016 - Christmas Event

7th Dec 2016 - Carol Service

Sport, Recreation and Cemetery Committee Report

The Sport Recreation and Cemetery Committee has been working to move projects forward this year, working with various groups in the town and updating/refurbishing other areas.

Canada Green

Working with the Royal British Legion we have created a WW1 Remembrance area at the

side of Canada Green. This has been planted with poppies and a donated bench installed.



Goldsmiths Recreation Ground

We have carried out resurfacing work to the youth play area.

Phase two of the

Sport, Recreation and Cemetery Committee Report continued...

upgrade to the changing rooms is underway. This involves improved referee facilities.

A working party has been set up in conjunction with Crowborough Runners to look at the upgrading of the running track and athletics facilities. We have had discussions with England Athletics and visited other facilities in the area. Our aim is to achieve a facility which the town can be proud of.

We are making enquiries at present regarding installing adult exercise equipment. Is this something you might use? We would welcome input as to whether this should be in one particular area or spread around the recreation ground. Please let the town hall know your comments.

Wolfe Recreation Ground

We have carried out repairs to play equipment at Wolfe Recreation Ground. We have also carried out work at the Council's works yard to comply with health and safety.

Herne Cemetery

A replacement fence has been installed. We have also carried out a survey of memorials in the cemetery. Where possible grave owners have been contacted and asked to effect repairs to memorials considered at high risk. Where this is not possible the Council has agreed to undertake remedial work to high risk monuments.

Summersales

Work on the new access track and car park has been started. A working party has now been set up to look at layout/design/costs/

maintenance requirements etc. to enable a new cemetery and natural burial ground to open.



Allotments

New poly tunnels and a rest area/toilet facility/storage area have been installed at Pilmer Road Allotments.

Palesgate Lane

With the new council a new working party has been set up to work with the Jarvis Brook Sports Club to look at improving drainage on the land which we would like to use for sporting activities.

We have granted Crowborough Scouts permission to occasionally use the second field for camping activities and to practise their countryside skills.

David Foot – Operations Manager

I would like to take this opportunity to thank David Foot the Operations Manager who will be retiring at the end of March, for his endless enthusiasm, knowledge and input to the Sport, Recreation and Cemetery Committee. He has contributed a vast amount to all the projects this committee undertakes and will be sorely missed.

Cllr Kay Moss

Please visit our website to find contact details for your local Town Councillors



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