



Crowborough News

Special Edition
Annual Report

Mayor's Report



2012 -2013 has been a very unique and busy year for the Town Council. We have celebrated both the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Torch procession coming through Crowborough. The Council has remained at full strength with 16 members during the year.

Since my election as Mayor in May 2012, my wife and I have attended over 60 engagements with five of those presenting primary school children in Crowborough with the Town Council gifts of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee commemorative coins.

I have been privileged and honoured to represent the town on numerous occasions, including welcoming our friends from Montargis in France, to attending the Carnival in Horwich, our other twin town, where we were given a wonderful reception by the Mayor and the Carnival committee.

Over the last year I have had the chance to meet the many volunteers, both in Crowborough and in East Sussex, generally, who give freely their time as supporters and drivers, in helping the more vulnerable members of our society. I have also met many of the organisers of our local clubs and organisations which are run for the youths and other members of our community. I have observed the sporting, musical and artistic talents of so many people. The new Crowborough Community Centre has had a very successful beginning thanks to the hard work and commitment of the committee and staff and financial support from the Council.

As a Council, members and the committees have remained focussed and determined to serve the community in every possible way. It has often had to be patient in waiting for other authorities to make decisions about their projects and budgets before moving forward on its own plans for the future.

The Town Council website has continued to provide essential information to the community and has details of all the Council's committee meetings and deliberations.

We have held our usual calendar of events despite the weather, including the Summer Fair, the Fireworks display, the Christmas Fair and the Carol Service. This year we also hosted the Olympic Torch procession and adorned the town with beautiful floral displays and Olympic banners, and gave advice through the Town Council website for those community members holding Diamond Jubilee Street Parties. The details of council work and projects during the year will be covered in the various Committee reports by the chairmen.

To conclude I would like to thank the Town Hall and grounds staff for their hard work and commitment throughout the year. I would like to thank fellow councillors for their support and to everyone who has donated to the three Mayor's charities this year, Home Start, Clued-Up and the Alzheimer's Society. Finally, I wish to thank all our local organisations, charities, churches and the police in Crowborough, which have done so much in supporting the Crowborough community during 2012-2013.

Cllr Michael Cooke, Town Mayor

Planning & Development Report

The past year has been interesting for Crowborough. Wealden District Council received an initial report from the Inspector into it's Core Strategy Local Plan in spring of 2012 and about the same time, the Government adopted the National Planning Policy Framework. The Core Strategy Local Plan has had a big impact on development within the town.

Due to our location adjacent to the Ashdown Forest, the Core Strategy Local Plan has confirmed that development within the town is restricted. This means that planning applications that might increase vehicle traffic and, hence, nitrogen deposition on the forest are routinely refused planning permission. For this reason, less planning applications are received by the District Council and, as they ask for our opinions on all applications, we are receiving less applications to look at. We are also seeing a smaller range of application types – most applications are now for household extensions and minor changes of use, which do not affect nitrogen deposition.

Despite the reduction in the number and type of application, this is still a busy Committee. We meet every three weeks and (apart from one meeting), consider a number of applications at every meeting.

The National Planning Policy Framework has had less impact on development in Crowborough. Because of the location close to the Ashdown Forest, there is limited chance of development within the town, so the requirements to increase housing development do not affect Crowborough in the same way as many towns. In addition, the adoption of the Core Strategy Local Plan means that local policy is up to date.

We also try to pick up on relevant consultations both from national and local government. This has included a consultation on what development can be carried out without needing planning permission, including proposals for very large extensions to houses up to 6 or 8m deep and extensions to commercial buildings. We have responded to District Council consultations regarding the location of development within Crowborough and proposals for Community Infrastructure Levy.

Finally, thank you to all the members of this Committee. It is a time consuming process going through all the applications and other documentation every three weeks, taking up a lot of councillors weekends prior to our Monday evening meeting.

Chairman Cllr Andrew Steen

Finance & General Purposes Report

The role of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is to ensure the smooth running of the operation of the Council – the role of the Committee is that of a facilitator.

During the year ended March 2013 the Finance and General Purposes Committee has worked in the following areas;

Corporate management of the council and administrative services;

- Accounting services
- Audit – both internal and external – taking action on any recommendations made
- Accommodation

Finance & General Purposes Report continued...

- Corporate Governance
- Legal services
- Servicing of loans – PWLB loan for the Crowborough Community Centre
- Investment strategy – In light of the banking crisis/uncertain economic climate

Standing Orders, financial procedures and risk management. – updated for new legislation and any structural changes within the Council.

Democratic representation of the council including the following:

- Elections
- Members' allowances – No increase in allowances for 2013/14
- Mayor's Fund

Grants to community organisations – In 2012/13 grants of £48702 were awarded, £2000 was allocated towards twinning activities and the committee agreed to continue its support of the Crowborough Youth Bank.

The Service Level Agreements with Clued Up and Wealden CAB were updated.

I would like to thank the staff that have serviced the Committee this year and my fellow Councillors who served on the Committee.

Chairman Cllr Neil Waller

Communications & Events Report

It was an exciting year for the Communications & Events Committee. There was celebration, fun, some controversy and lots of rain!

A personal highlight was appearing on Radio 4 to discuss our decision to reduce the number of times that we raise our flags in the yearly calendar. I am proud to say that Crowborough still marks more events than any other local council that I am aware of.

Crowborough marked the Diamond Jubilee by being part of a Beacon lighting ceremony that took place throughout the whole of the United Kingdom. Hundreds of people attended this special and unique event and I am pleased that we listened to the feedback we received and proceeded with this very special celebration.

Crowborough was also part of a once in a lifetime spectacle when the town was picked to host the Olympic torch procession. Thousands flocked to Crowborough to cheer on the runners as they made their way through the town.

The weather did not stay with us though for our Summer Fair. For the second year running the heavens opened and torrential rain meant the event was a complete wash out. Thanks must go to all the stall holders, entertainers and members of the public that braved the horrendous weather.

The events held in the second half of the year were not so rain soaked. Keeping the firework display on a Saturday proved to be the right decision with record attendance. The Christmas lights event was held on a Friday evening for the first time and once again this proved very successful with nearly 2000 people turning up to enjoy the entertainment on offer. Twenty stall holders attended selling items as diverse as cup cakes and silk scarves. We intend this number to grow to add to the atmosphere. Our Angel Christmas lights proved very popular this year with one resi-

Communications & Events Report continued...

dent describing them as “the best we have ever had”. Our children’s ‘design a light’ competition was such a huge success last year that we have decided to run it again this year. Look out for entry boxes from June in local primary schools, the library and the Town Hall.

2013 promises a year of even more exciting events. We are organising the biggest ever Sussex Day event for Sunday June 16th. The event will held on Chapel Green from 2.00pm – 5.00pm. The Crowborough Players will be performing a traditional mummings play, there will be singing and dancing from local groups and we have booked Morris dancers, face painters, a bouncy castle and of course Punch and Judy to entertain us for the afternoon.

After too many wet Summer Fairs we held a public consultation about the future of the Fair. Alternatives were suggested, such as a free circus, which would be undercover. Overall public feeling was to stick with the Summer Fair. However, we have made some improvements – the large marquee will have proper flooring, hopefully eliminating the plethora of worms that appeared last year! We have booked an amazing array of arena entertainment for 2013 including a professional stunt team and birds of prey displays. The activities booked for the day so far are a rodeo bull, trampolines and a climbing wall. As with last year’s event they are all free.

Following feedback, we are spending more on our fireworks for 2013 to give a longer, even more spectacular display.

We are looking at extending our events calendar as we feel we need something else at the early part of the year. We are currently investigating a Mayor’s charity quiz night to be in held in February or a town quiz trail. We value your opinion so do let us know what you would like, feedback and ideas please to Caroline Miles at caroline@crowboughtowncouncil.gov.uk

Below is a list of dates for all the events we are organising this year. Please support them by attending as many as possible.

- The Boundary Walk – Sunday May 5th
- Sussex Day – Sunday June 16th
- Summer Fair – Saturday July 13th
- The Firework Display – Saturday November 2nd
- Christmas Lights event – Friday November 29th
- Civic Carol Service – Tuesday December 3rd

Cllr Matthew Street



**Christmas Cracker
2012 event**

Sports, Recreation & Cemetery Report

The past year has been a very busy time for the committee with many projects either starting or being completed.

Summary of projects planned or carried out

Goldsmiths Recreation Ground

- A new fence has been installed at the entrance to the recreation ground to prevent vandalism

Sports, Recreation & Cemetery Report continued...

to the Crowborough Locomotive Societies' track.

- A filter system has been installed on the boating lake to prevent the build-up of algae which has caused problems for model boat owners.
- Problems were found with the drainage from the pétanque court car park and a pumping system has been installed to resolve the problem.
- The surface of the Basket Ball court has deteriorated and it is planned to resurface this when ground conditions improve.
- The beacon which has been at Goldsmiths for many years is showing signs of movement and it is proposed to have an inspection to determine if it needs repairing or replacement.
- Part funding is available for the provision of a youth shelter at the recreation ground and discussions are taking place with local youths on the best model.

Pilmer Allotments

- A fencing system has been installed to try and prevent Rabbits entering the site and causing damage to planting.

Alderbrook Playing Fields

- Problems were encountered with the drainage to the car park and access road.
- Works were carried out and the problem has been resolved.

Wolfe Recreation Ground

- The club house required rewiring to comply with current regulations and this has been carried out.
- The cricket score board is being relocated to a more suitable location.
- A number of projects have been carried out to the works yard buildings which include a new kitchen and locker room.
- A second rainwater storage tank has been installed in the works yard to double the capacity to cope with any future drought situations and to water hanging baskets.

Whitehall Centre

- The hot water system has been upgraded and the upgraded system is being installed. Part of the upgrade will be to remove the cold water storage tank and put all the systems onto mains water.

War Memorial

- Following a request for the British Legion a purpose built rail has been installed at the memorial for mounting wreaths at remembrance services.

New Cemetery

- The current cemetery in Herne Road is near its capacity and the Council had previously purchased a piece of land at Summersales in London Road, which is earmarked for a new cemetery.

After approval from full Council to proceed, the committee have now appointed a planning consultant to prepare a design for the cemetery with the intension of seeking planning approval from Wealden District Council.

Chairman Cllr Ron Reed

Environment Committee Report

The Environment Committee is responsible for the appearance of the town and this includes the floral displays, street furniture, notice boards and signs, dog waste bins and wooden fingerposts. The Committee also liaises with East Sussex County Council on issues affecting the highway, transport and environment. Other functions of the Committee include footway street lighting and the management of the Council's amenity land at the Ghyll and the Country Park.

I thank all the members of the Environment Committee for their hard work and the amount of time they have given this year. We have had several working parties in operation resulting in Councillors taking time out to meet at various locations, with appropriate advisers and interested parties. Their reports to the Committee are paramount when making decisions. 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.

PLANTING - The year started with a buzz as we had two once in a life time events to plan and a big thank you to the ground staff for the excellent planting displays throughout the town this year. There have been many appreciative comments from the general public. The Town Council taking over responsibility for planting at the Fernbank Centre made a big difference to the impact in the town centre. How quickly the occasions of the Jubilee and Olympic torch passed but the excellent planting lived on.

To commemorate the Jubilee the Town Council purchased a Jubilee Royal Oak Sapling. It has been suggested that Summersales is a suitable eventual location for the sapling once plans for the site have been drawn up. The provision of a commemorative plaque has also been discussed. The tree has been recorded in the Council's register of commemorative trees.

HIGHWAYS ISSUES - Strengthening Local Relationships. Due to cutbacks it has become increasingly important to hold regular meetings with the Highway personnel from East Sussex County Council so that we may lobby them on any highway issues. Councillors are invited to put forward issues for discussion at the Strengthening Local Relationship meetings. The Committee has been influential by taking part in consultations on traffic calming and safety measures.

GRASS CUTTING - There has been an increase in grass and weeds growing on pavements and kerbs. East Sussex County Council has a maintenance programme for spraying and any issues can be reported via their website.

The Town Council considered taking over the cutting of grass verges but found it is not economically viable.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT - It gives me pleasure to once again thank John Coleman who has continued to be the Town Council's representative for rail transport. He keeps the Committee informed by attending Community Transport meetings and has helped us with various consultations. It is good to have the help of a railway enthusiast to steer us through the complicated network system.

WEALDLINK BUS SERVICE - The Town Council is a major contributor to the funding of the Wealdlink Bus Service. There are 3 14-seater buses with tail lifts for wheelchairs and there has been a 50% increase in passenger trips over the last 12 months. The service aims to help those who struggle to cope with public transport, many of whom live isolated lives. The service is subsidised and the fares can be found on their website.

ENVIRONMENT WARDEN - The six month trial with our new Environment Warden was such a success that Julie was taken on in a permanent role for 24 hours a week.

POLICE - We liaise regularly with the Police and Sgt Keeler recently reported on the work of the neighbourhood police team in Crowborough. The results of a Wealden Survey revealed that speeding, burglary and anti-social behaviour are priority issues in Crowborough.

POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER - The Town Council funds one full time Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). It was with regret that we had to say goodbye to Chi Yau who has now moved on to another role but are delighted to welcome Chris Harrison who is already a very experienced PCSO in Crowborough. Chris has been very active setting up Neighbourhood Watch in the community and will be assisting the other PCSOs in their respective wards by attending street and panel meetings, providing holiday cover etc.

STREET LIGHTING - Changes introducing part-night street lighting in Crowborough were made last spring. There was a consultation on the initial proposals and this resulted in a few minor amendments to the scheme. East Sussex County Council reviewed the scheme 3 months after installation and 12 comments had been received. A few comments have come directly to the Town Hall about individual lighting columns. Overall the part-night scheme has been well received and has resulted in energy savings of £3000 in the first year.

COUNTRY PARK AND GHYLL - The ground staff have been efficiently working through the maintenance programme and everything is on track ready for the summer. They have worked well with the conservationists on maintaining the Natural Habit in the Country Park and Ghyll. The land at Palesgate Lane adjacent to the Ghyll, including the woodland, now falls under the control of this Committee. We thank Crowborough Conservation volunteers for their hard work and Barry Kemp for his ecological report of species found at our sites.

TREE INSPECTION - A specialist was employed to conduct a tree survey in conjunction with members of the ground staff, 3 of whom are now qualified to undertake basic tree inspections and carry out some of the required work. Annual inspections are to be carried out in accordance with the adopted Tree Inspection Policy.

TOWN MAP - A much needed Town Map is almost ready for installing at various locations around the town. I would like to thank Dave Brooker for volunteering his services as cartographer.

The Environment Committee will endeavour to keep Crowborough a clean, safe and attractive Town in which to live.

Chairman Cllr Sandra Timms

Crowborough Town Councillors *(in alphabetical order)*

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