

Minutes of a MEETING of the 110<sup>th</sup> **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY** of the Local Electors of the Parish of Crowborough held at All Saints Church Centre, Chapel Green on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at 7.30pm.

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Town Councillors present:

Quentin Burch	Ron Reed
Michael Cooke	Wendy Scrace
Peter Cowie	Andrew Steen
Beverley Johnstone	Matthew Street
George Moss	Sandra Timms
Kay Moss	Neil Waller (also a WDC Councillor)

In attendance:

WDC Councillors: David Larkin Steve Isted Di Phillips

ESCC Councillors: Richard Stogdon

Philippa Hewes	Town Clerk
Caroline Miles	Events Co-ordinator
Susan Barnard	Operations Administrator
David Phillips	Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development, WDC
Dr Elizabeth Gill	High Weald Havens and Lewes Clinical Commissioning Group

One member of the press

57 members of the public

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The Town Mayor, Cllr Peter Cowie, welcomed all those present.

### **CROWBOROUGH COMMUNITY FIRST RESPONDERS**

George Moss, Senior Team Leader and Trainer, gave an informative presentation about the work of Crowborough Community First Responders. Responders are trained volunteers who support the work of the ambulance service. They are able to give urgent first aid, assess the situation and gather patient information, thereby allowing an informed handover to the ambulance crew or police. The Crowborough team covers the town and surrounding villages, serving a population of about 30,000. Fundraising is vital to assist with the cost of equipment and training.

## **ASHDOWN FOREST PLANNING ISSUES**

David Phillips, Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development for Wealden District Council, spoke about the effects of planning constraints in Crowborough due to the town's close proximity to the Ashdown Forest. Damage to the forest is being caused by nitrogen deposition. The Core Strategy allows for 300 houses to be built in Crowborough over the next 15 years in an attempt to balance growth with environmental constraints. Legal challenges to this plan have failed. Wealden District Council is working with developers to provide SANGS. There will be some capacity for the growth of employment and community use e.g. at Pine Grove, and a large employment space will be developed in Maresfield. The 7km forest protection zone has had a negative economic impact on the district.

In answer to questions it was explained that the planned SANGS will have capacity for additional housing but that at a minimum, a SANGS must provide a 2.5km circular walk. Wealden District Council's tourism strategy is to increase value rather than volume. Complaints were made by members of the public that, due to the lack of industrial development in Crowborough, traffic will increase across the forest to the new industrial units in Maresfield, and that the proposed SANGS is too far away to mitigate development at Pine Grove.

## **HIGH WEALD HAVENS AND LEWES CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP**

Dr Elizabeth Gill, Chairman of the High Weald Havens and Lewes Clinical Commissioning Group, outlined its achievements so far and its plans for the future. The CCG is just one year old, is GP led, and incorporates 22 practices and 164,000 patients. So far, £5-6m has been found in efficiencies and a range of improvements to services has been commissioned. The aim is to improve patient safety, services and care, with greater emphasis on community hospitals and primary care. Funds have already been committed to improve dementia care. Twelve months' notice has been served on East Sussex Healthcare Trust with a view to improving services at Crowborough Hospital.

## **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2013**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2013 were confirmed and signed.

## **TO RECEIVE THE RECORD OF ATTENDANCES OF TOWN COUNCILLORS FROM MAY 2013**

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

## **TO RECEIVE THE REPORTS OF TRUSTEES**

The following reports were received by the meeting:

Smith and Fermor Charities Report  
Annual Rail Report

John Coleman was thanked for his Annual Rail Report and for his regular updates to the Town Council.

## **TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT**

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

Cheques were presented to representatives of the Mayor's chosen charities: The Meningitis Research Trust and the Sussex High Weald Dementia Social Group.

## **REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES**

Questions were invited on the Chairmen's reports.

### **Finance and General Purposes**

Chairman Cllr Quentin Burch stated that the Town Council's finances were in good shape and that there had been no increase in the Council's share of the precept this year. The start-up grant to the Community Centre was coming to an end but repayment of the loan would take another 17 years. Grants totalling £50,000 were awarded to a number of local organisations including the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Clued-Up Info.

### **Communications and Events**

Cllr Matthew Street, Committee Chairman, reported on the many successful events over the last year. The next Firework Display will be held on the actual day, Wednesday November 5<sup>th</sup>. The Town Council website has been improved and additional communication now occurs via Facebook and Twitter. In response to a comment that the list of Councillors on the website does not state party affiliations, it was explained that this information is stated on members' interest forms.

### **Environment**

Environment Committee Chairman Cllr Sandra Timms highlighted the fact that the Town Council may have to part-fund some highways projects in Crowborough due to cuts in East Sussex County Council's budget. The cost of litter clearing and dog bin collections is considerable and it is intended that a volunteer litter picking day will be organised in the near future. Street meetings are often well attended and Town Councillors have found them a valuable resource for learning about local issues. A request was made for town planting to be completed in time for the Fun Day on 31<sup>st</sup> May. Questions were received on the Bluebell Wood and parking. Concerns were raised about the proposed crossing outside Beacon Academy, particularly with regard to car parking on the bend between Fermor School and Beacon, and with regard to fears that two crossings in such close proximity will cause gridlocked traffic.

## **Planning and Development**

Chairman Cllr Andrew Steen explained that, due to planning constraints in Crowborough, most planning applications are for small-scale extensions or minor changes of use. The Town Council is planning to create a Neighbourhood Plan and residents were invited to contact the Town Hall if they would like to be involved.

## **Sport, Recreation and Cemetery**

Cllr Ron Reed, Committee Chairman, reported on the many projects undertaken over the last year and the plans for the future. Planning permission was obtained for a new cemetery at Summersales and work is progressing on various conditions including a reduction in the speed limit on the road outside the site. A request was received for localised lighting at Goldsmiths skate park, possibly using solar panels.

## **OPEN FORUM**

A former officer in charge at Crowborough Fire Station, highlighted plans to downgrade Crowborough Fire Station so that it is manned by retained firefighters only. He explained that this could lead to a potentially dangerous situation to the 30,000 people in and around Crowborough. He urged people to oppose the move by taking part in the consultation.

The Town Mayor thanked all the committees for their work during the year and thanked the Town Council staff for their support and hard work. He also thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.55pm.