

Minutes of a MEETING of the 111th **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY** of the Local Electors of the Parish of Crowborough held at All Saints Church, Chapel Green, on Wednesday 4th March 2015 at 7.30pm.

Town Councillors present:

Paul Adams	Kay Moss
Quentin Burch	Ron Reed
Michael Cooke	Wendy Scrace
Peter Cowie	Andrew Steen
Elizabeth Fermor	Matthew Street
Philip Fermor	Neil Waller (also a WDC Councillor)

In attendance:

WDC Councillors: David Larkin Steve Isted Di Phillips

ESCC Councillors: Richard Stogdon Sylvia Tidy

Philippa Hewes	Town Clerk
Caroline Miles	Events Co-ordinator
Susan Barnard	Operations Administrator
Katy Bourne	Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex
Dr Chris Kempshall	First World War Project Manager, ESCC

267 members of the public

The Town Mayor, Cllr Ron Reed, welcomed all those present and explained that the meeting would be recorded.

KATY BOURNE, POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR SUSSEX

Katy Bourne spoke about her responsibilities as the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex. The introduction of PCCs in place of the Police Authority has resulted in greater police engagement with the public and business in the formulation of local police crime plans. Policing priorities are determined by the PCC following liaison with the public. The PCC holds the Chief Constable to account and is responsible for overseeing the police budget, implementing future budget cuts, and ensuring best use of resources. Sussex Police has the fourth lowest budget in the country.

DR CHRIS KEMPSHALL, FIRST WORLD WAR PROJECT MANAGER AT EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Dr Kempshall described his work leading the WW1 Centenary Commemoration Project for ESCC. The project seeks to commemorate and record Sussex's

experience of WW1, as well as the wartime experiences of Sussex people. A website has been created (<http://www.eastsussexww1.org.uk>) which is full of information and personal stories, and on which forthcoming commemorative events can be advertised. The Sussex War Memorial Project seeks to record WW1 memorials in Sussex. People are urged to contact Dr Kempshall if they have WW1 memorabilia, especially diaries, letters and photos, and to upload any personal stories onto the website. The website has already proved a valuable resource to people undertaking family research. The project legacy will be a vast store of information which can be accessed into the future by the public for research or educational purposes; everything on the website will be archived at The Keep in Brighton.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:-
Cllr Jeanette Towey (WDC)
Cllr Sandra Timms (CTC)
Ann Haig-McVitie

TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12TH JANUARY 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2015 were approved and signed.

TO RECEIVE THE RECORD OF ATTENDANCES OF TOWN COUNCILLORS FROM MAY 2014

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/GROUPS

The following reports were received by the meeting:

Smith and Fermor Charities Report
Annual Rail Report
Crowborough Fairtrade

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, Crowborough Community First Responders and the Sussex High Weald Dementia Social Group.

REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Questions were invited on the Chairmen's reports.

Communications and Events

Chairman Cllr Matthew Street announced that next year would mark the 50th anniversary of Crowborough's twinning with Montargis and that plans are being made to commemorate this occasion. The 25th anniversary of twinning with Horwich would be celebrated with a reception and resigning of a twinning charter.

Environment

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Cllr Elizabeth Fermor, spoke about the positive feedback from the public concerning the floral displays within the town, which has been much appreciated.

Finance and General Purposes

Cllr Quentin Burch, Committee Chairman, explained that old Town Council records had been moved to The Keep, where they can still be accessed by the public, and that audio and video recordings would be made of Town Council meetings in future. He provided a comprehensive summary of the current situation regarding the possible purchase by the Town Council of the Pine Grove offices. The Town Council portion of the Council Tax will rise by 16% next year, in addition to a 2% rise to cover normal expenditure, in order that the possibility of purchasing the site remains open. An offer has been made to Wealden District Council by the Town Council to purchase the site for the purpose of creating a community hub and enterprise centre for up to 60 businesses in an effort to help regenerate the town. A public consultation is about to take place throughout Crowborough in order to determine whether the public supports the proposal. A loan of £2.65M will be required to finance the project, although this amount may be reduced if grants can be obtained. The site could be sold if the project does not succeed.

In answer to questions, if the purchase proceeds, the library will remain in situ. Wealden District Council might choose to reject the Town Council's bid and proceed with an offer from another bidder to create a residential extra care scheme.

Planning and Development

Chairman Cllr Andrew Steen described the work of the Committee and explained that mostly small, householder applications were currently coming through the system due to the Ashdown Forest building restrictions. The Committee had taken part in the public consultation and inspector's examination of Wealden's Local Plan and had recommended refusal of the Walshes Road development. A planning application is expected at any time for the bulk of the land at Pine Grove. Cllr Steen also spoke about the development of the Crowborough Neighbourhood Plan, which is working towards determining future land use. More volunteers are sought to participate in this project.

In answer to questions, the land at Pine Grove identified for housing in the Local Plan is owned partly by the district council and partly by the county council. The Town Council does not want any car parking spaces to be lost in the town centre. The inspector has still not reported on the Local Plan.

Sport, Recreation and Cemetery

Cllr Kay Moss, Committee Chairman, highlighted the positive collaboration that had occurred with young people in the design of the upgraded skate park at Goldsmiths. Play equipment has also been replaced at both Goldsmiths and Wolfe Recreation Grounds. The water systems at Goldsmith Recreation Ground have been upgraded. A piece of land adjacent to The Glebelands has recently reverted to Town Council use and will become a WW1 reflection and commemoration area. The creation of a new cemetery at Summersales is progressing.

REPORT ON PINE GROVE

The public will be consulted on whether the Town Council should proceed with plans to purchase the old office building in Pine Grove. The site represents an opportunity to create an enterprise centre for start-up businesses.

In response to questions, more information can be obtained at the public drop-in sessions and, for the project to proceed, public support will be required. Consultation leaflets will be delivered to every household in Crowborough and the consultation period ends on 8th April. Names and addresses will be required so that they can be verified as Crowborough residents.

OPEN FORUM

In response to a question, the Town Council cannot do anything to improve the state of vacant shops because they are privately owned. The Town Council, via the Planning and Development Committee, can seek to prevent property alterations going ahead which are out of keeping in the town centre but it is ultimately Wealden District Council which makes the decisions.

Further questions sought clarity on aspects of the Pine Grove public consultation.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting and urged them to take part in the public consultation.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.