

Minutes of a meeting of the 113th **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY** of the Local Electors of the Parish of Crowborough held at All Saints Church, Chapel Green, Crowborough on Wednesday 12th April 2017 at 7.30pm

Town Councillors Present:

Peter Ellefsen
Martyn Garrett
Richard Jury
David Larkin
Chris Moss
Alan Penney

Ron Reed*
Greg Rose*
Wendy Scrace
Matthew Street
Sandra Timms
Neil Waller*

*Denotes those also WDC Councillors

In attendance:

WDC Councillors: Philip Lunn Jim Hollins

ESCC Councillors: Sylvia Tidy Richard Stogdon

Andy Beams Town Clerk
Caroline Miles Deputy Town Clerk
Amanda Negus Committee Clerk

148 members of the public

The Town Mayor, Cllr Ron Reed welcomed all those present.

KELVIN WILLIAMS, HEAD OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES FOR WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Kelvin Williams, Head of Planning and Environmental Services for Wealden District Council (WDC) explained that planning is viewed as being one of the main drivers of growth. The Government state that around 200,000 houses should be built in a year in the UK, but it is nothing like that.

WDC have to think about many factors such as infrastructure when considering each application. The integrity of Ashdown Forest is a major factor, which also affects decisions made in the districts of Lewes, Eastbourne, Rother and Tunbridge Wells.

There will be no significant growth in housing in Crowborough because of the Forest. A lot of applications currently in the system cannot be progressed because of Ashdown Forest without compensation measures being put in place. Not much in the way of large green field sites will be going ahead. Infill sites are more likely to be built on.

The Draft Local Plan has now been published by WDC and there will be opportunity to comment.

In response to questions Kelvin Williams explained that the Mead House car park would count as a brown field site and an application to build on it could possibly be progressed as all applications are treated in the same way, however no such application currently exists. Any money raised from the sale of the car park would go back into infrastructure and any sale would save tax payers money.

Further questions were raised in regard to the sale of Mead House car park and Kelvin Williams explained they should be directed to WDC's Asset Management Team as he was only in a position to answer questions related to planning.

In response to a point raised by a member of the public Kelvin Williams agreed that Crowborough is crying out for smaller homes. All applications have to provide sufficient parking for residents and their visitors. He was unable to comment on the future of Bluebell Wood.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

CTC Cllr Quentin Burch
CTC Cllr George Moss
CTC Cllr Kay Moss
CTC Cllr David Neeves
WDC Cllr Stephen Isted

TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6th APRIL 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2016 were approved and signed.

TO RECEIVE THE RECORD OF ATTENDANCES OF TOWN COUNCILLORS FROM MAY 2016

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 WITH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

The following reports were received by the meeting:

Annual Rail Report
Crowborough Fairtrade

TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

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

The Town Mayor explained there had been several staff changes over the last year, but with the employment of Andy Beams the new Town Clerk things are now running smoothly. He was proud to be at the presentation of the Queens Award for Enterprise to Servomex; a prestigious award for a Crowborough company.

The Town Mayor explained a little about the work his chosen charities undertake and cheques were presented to representatives from each of them. Suzi Mitchell from Taylor-Made Dreams and Abigail Harley from Chestnut Tree House each received £1819.98.

REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Questions were invited on the Chairmen's reports.

Environment

Cllr Greg Rose, Chairman of the Environment Committee explained that Crowborough Town Council (CTC) receive many requests for speed calming measure and yellow lines. This is an East Sussex County Council (ESCC) area of responsibility. Following recent consultations with ESCC 12 locations across Crowborough have this week been confirmed including Mill Lane.

CTC are looking to employ a Community Warden with the aim of filling some of the gaps left by the removal of the PCSO's. The Warden will work closely with the Police and provide a visible presence on the street. After 6 months training by Sussex Police he/she will have specific powers including fining for dog fouling, littering, but not for parking as this remains a Sussex Police responsibility. CTC will be able to direct the Warden where and when they are needed as the role will have variable working hours.

In answer to questions Cllr Rose explained that CTC do not have the ability to do anything about parking issues, or dangerous driving. All complaints must be reported to Sussex Police.

He also explained CTC used to fund a dedicated Crowborough PCSO until Sussex Police removed the ability to do this. The new Warden will be funded in the same way and money has been budgeted to secure this role for an initial 3 year period.

Communication and Events

Cllr Matthew Street, Chairman of the Communication and Events Committee was delighted to see Crowborough feature within the top 25 of the Sunday Times best places to live in the South East, specifically mentioning the towns events. Cllr Street said the events are very well attended from 100 people joining the Boundary Walk, up to 10,000 enjoying the annual firework display. Su Pollard proved very popular turning on the Christmas lights and the event was a great success. Cllr Street thanked Caroline Miles for all her organisational work.

The 50th anniversary celebrations of Crowborough's twinning with Montargis have taken place and the Society are looking for more members.

The Crowborough Community Festival will be taking place throughout May with over 20 events many of which are free. Cllr Matthew Street extended his thanks to Denis Hart for his vision and hard work. He urged everyone to support the Festival making Crowborough a community centre. The Festival opens on May 1st with the Lost World Family Fun Day at Goldsmiths. More volunteers are needed on the day.

He hopes Crowborough can make the top spot in the best places list next year!

Finance and General Purposes

Cllr Peter Ellefsen, Deputy Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee invited questions.

Concerns and questions were raised about the lack of information concerning Pine Grove, and the apparent lack of progress for much needed office space in the Town. Cllr Ellefsen, the Town Mayor and Town Clerk between them explained that until contracts are signed there are commercially sensitive elements to the project. All Councillors are very much on-board and delays are because they are determined to get things right for the long term future of the building. CTC and Basepoint are both very committed to making this project a success. Finances have been secured, ESCC have provided a grant and a loan, a Project Manager has been appointed, contracts are close to being signed and a press release will follow. Apologies were extended for the absence of details.

Another concern was raised about the prospective loss of car parking spaces should the Mead House car park be sold because of its necessity for the success of Pine Grove as a business centre.

Planning and Development

Cllr Peter Ellefsen, Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee invited questions.

Kelvin Williams had earlier explained the 300 limit on homes that could be built in Crowborough and how it was almost all used up. Therefore green field applications will likely be automatically refused. He also mentioned how brown field sites can increase the number of planning applications. A question was raised and a discussion took place as to whether building houses on the Mead House Car Park (considered as a brown field site) would increase the amount of traffic compared to the existing use as a car park, as this aspect would have to be considered in any planning application in regard to Ashdown Forest.

Sport, Recreation and Cemetery

Cllr Martyn Garrett, Vice Chairman of the Sport, Recreation and Cemetery Committee commented that since Cllr Kay Moss has written her report CTC's Ranger has cleared the weed from the Goldsmiths Boating Lake and is working with an Ecologist to keep it fit for purpose.

Utilising Section 106 planning money the Goldsmiths running track contractor has been appointed following consultation with Crowborough Runners. At the same time the netball courts will also be resurfaced.

The Committee hope to provide in the future adult outside gym equipment in Crowborough's recreation parks, similar to that in Jarvis Brook.

OPEN FORUM

A Resolution was proposed in regard to the sale of Mead House Car Park (attached), seconded and following discussion carried with support from $\frac{3}{4}$ of the room.

Some of the points raised during the discussion:

- Crowborough Community Association (CCA) believe the Mead House Car Park spaces were counted into consideration when planning permission was granted for the Community Centre and the selling of the Mead House Car Park is against the planning definition of the Pine Grove area and the Local Plan.
- The Mead House Car Park will support the new business hub coming to Pine Grove.
- The Mead House Car Park will be the 3rd car park WDC have sold in Crowborough.
- WDC have previously talked about extra spaces near the recycling area in the main car park, possibly going into the Bluebell Wood. It was questioned if this is likely to happen.
- It was questioned as to why has the WDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee allowed for this prospective sale to be tabled.
- There needs to be awareness for the need of additional housing in Crowborough.

A point was raised about Crowborough's train service letting the town down with it's lack of access for disabled passengers and those travelling with pushchairs.

CTC were thanked for providing Owlsbury Allotments with a request for the unused plots to be regularly mown to keep the spread of weeds to a minimum.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.