

Minutes of a meeting of the **CROWBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL** held at the Council Offices, Pine Grove, Crowborough on Tuesday 9th November 2021 at 7.30pm

Present	Councillors	Alison Arthur	
		Peter Bucklitsch*	
		Martyn Garrett*	
		Richard Jury	
		Tracey Lovewell*	
		Kay Moss	(also WDC)
		David Neeves	Mayor
		Gareth Owen-Williams	(also WDC)
		Alan Penney	
		Ron Reed	(also WDC)
		Colin Stocks	
		Matthew Street*	Deputy Mayor
		Neil Waller	(also WDC)
Natalie Whittle			

Also present	CLlr Johanna Howell	ESCC
	CLlr Philip Lunn	ESCC/WDC
	Caroline Miles	Town Clerk
	Melanie Street	Assistant Town Clerk

8 members of the public in the chamber
 3 members of the public online
 1 member of the press

*Denotes non attendance

The meeting opened with a prayer.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of the public spoke regarding Item 12. He was pleased the council was considering a climate change policy but disappointed that 2.5.1 only aimed to reduce use of artificial fertiliser by 10% each year and asked why use could not stop immediately. A councillor responded explaining that artificial fertilisers are currently used in a variety of places including sports pitches which the council has agreed to maintain to certain standards. It may be possible to reduce the use of artificial fertilisers more quickly but the time frame and cost of such a reduction is not yet known.

The Chairman of 'Transition Crowborough' stated he would welcome the adoption of the Climate Change Policy. He asked why the policy only focussed on council business and what the council had in mind to encourage the community to move towards change. In response

a councillor explained that the council's policies only cover council actions and business because that is its mandate. Another councillor explained that the working group had considered this a two-stage process whereby the first stage would be the council's policy and the second stage would be community engagement.

A member of the public spoke stating there was an urgent need for a 20mph speed limit in the town centre. He asked what the outcome had been of the recent town council and ESCC Highways liaison meeting. He also stated that during the recent electric vehicle show in town he had spoken to tenants of the Crowborough Enterprise Centre who had informed him they would benefit from electric charging points in the car park. He asked that the council consider installing four wall sockets at the centre. In response a councillor gave an update on the liaison meeting and shared that the Environment Committee will be discussing budget proposals for necessary audits and speed surveys at its next meeting. County councillors had indicated they were supportive of this. Additionally, he stated that the council had considered the charge points for the Enterprise Centre in 2019 but had decided not to progress the item.

A member of the public thanked the working group for the Climate Change Policy document and the encouragement it would provide to the community. He expressed concern that residents without a driveway may find on-street charging difficult and that 2.3.3 in the Climate Change Policy may need to be broadened to be less constrictive. One councillor responded explaining that the issue of charge points was a broad subject that it was not possible to cover during this meeting. Another councillor thanked the resident for highlighting a potential issue with 2.3.3 and stated it may also present the council with difficulties with regard to its Financial Regulations and audit.

APOLOGIES

Cllr Peter Bucklitsch
Cllr Martyn Garrett
Cllr Tracey Lovewell
Cllr Matthew Street

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Colin Stocks declared a personal interest in Item 12 because he had written and copyrighted the climate change methodology spreadsheet and guidance notes.

MINUTES

To resolve that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21st September 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and ratified by the Chairman

9571 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2021 as confirmed be ratified by the Chairman.

The Mayor moved agenda Item 12 to be heard first due to members of the public present who had expressed an interest in this item.

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

To note the Climate Change Policy and agree further action

Members considered the proposed Climate Change Policy. Two members of the Climate Change Working Group shared its vision that the council lead the community by example, aiming to produce a clear, concise document with measurable and recordable systems.

Members debated some of the details of the Climate Change Policy. All members who spoke agreed that climate change is an important issue which needs addressing and the council should be considering its response.

The following concerns were raised by some councillors during the discussion:

- The proposed 10% annual reduction would be for the entire council but committees work with delegated powers and individual budgets; how would it be decided which committee projects and services were carried out? Would Full Council need to make all decisions? This may have an impact on services.
- There may be cost implications to approving the policy which may necessitate either an increase in council tax or a reduction in services.
- The methodology guidance suggests asking suppliers for Co2 emission information or supplying product component weight information if the former is not available. This is not yet a normal part of many businesses, particularly small, local suppliers, and contractors. It may necessitate using larger firms from further afield.
- Using a recording methodology and other proposals in the policy would require specialist knowledge. The current staff do not have the available time or knowledge to carry out this work and it may be necessary to employ someone to do this.
- The methodology attached with the policy may result in a large, cumbersome spreadsheet which is not user-friendly and may not work on all devices.
- There may be potential conflict with the council's Financial Regulations.
- Some of the recording and procedures may require technology which is not yet available.
- Whilst replacing the council's fleet with electric vehicles will work in many cases, it may be problematic for some of the off-road vehicles such as tractors. Electric tractors are still in their infancy and quite expensive. 2.6.2 would require any new tractor purchased to use renewable power sources.
- 2.6.1 states the preferred method of transport for staff. Whilst walking or using public transport may be appropriate for some indoor staff, this may not be the case for outdoor staff who need to carry tools and would impact their ability to do their job.
- 2.6.4 relating to hybrid working for staff should be an operational judgement and not made on environmental grounds.
- 2.3 relating to procurement is too restrictive and 2.3.2 may prevent the council from carrying out any major capital project. This section of the policy may seriously impact the council's provision of services.
- The working group had been established in March 2020 and working in depth on the policy document since this time; other councillors had only received the document and attachments the previous week with the agenda and had not had as long to consider it.

In response to some of the concerns raised, other councillors made the following comments:

- The Personnel Committee has already budgeted for a potential qualified member of staff to help with work resulting from this policy. Wealden District Council has recently employed an environmental officer to help guide it; the job description from this role may be helpful to the town council.
- 2.6.1 states 'preferred' method of transportation; it is not mandated.
- Hybrid working by staff is already taking place.
- Costs are not only financial and can also be financial, environmental and health related. Whilst some residents may not welcome an increase in council tax, others will welcome the environmental benefits this policy brings.
- A trial of the spreadsheet took place. The guidance notes may appear lengthy but are designed to cover all potential aspects of the spreadsheet and are meant to be comprehensive. The spreadsheet tries to incorporate the many elements required by the council and is therefore a wide but not complex document.
- The change in emissions for capital purchases can be spread across the expected lifetime of the purchase.
- National target is zero emissions by 2050; even using the proposed policy, the town council will only achieve 95% reduction by this date.

The Town Clerk was asked for staff feedback regarding the trial of the methodology and spreadsheet. It was reported that staff welcomed good practice relating to this issue but did not find this particular methodology user-friendly and reported it being overly complicated to use. This information had been relayed to the working group after the trial. It was noted that this was the only system considered to date. The member who had written the methodology informed Council that the underlying methodology was the Government's coefficients and that he would be agreeable to any other consistent and identified methodology being used.

Following a lengthy discussion and debate, the council agreed that it may be necessary to have more time to consider this policy.

9572 RESOLVED that a decision on the Climate Change Policy is deferred until council has had an opportunity to consider all opportunity costs of implementation.

Members discussed the timescale for deferral. It was agreed it should not be protracted.

9573 RESOLVED that the council meet informally one evening in the second week of January 2022 to discuss the Climate Change Policy.

Seven members of the public in the chamber left the meeting.

Two members of the public online left the meeting.

TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

One member asked Cllr Howell for answers to questions on the Solar Together project which had been raised at the meeting of 21st September 2021 but not included in her written report. Cllr Howell apologised for not including these and offered to respond to the

member if he submitted any questions via email. She was also asked whether the East Sussex County Council emissions reduction figure of 13% was an overall reduction, or per year, and for how many years the figure related. Cllr Howell confirmed the figure was 13% per year but did not have any information on how many years it related to.

Cllr Lunn was asked where the fatal road traffic accidents referenced in his written report had occurred and whether they represented an increase on the year. He did not have this information available at the meeting.

Two East Sussex County Councillors left the meeting.

TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CTC COUNCILLORS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Owen-Williams gave a verbal report as the council's representative on the Ashdown Forest Liaison Panel. He reported that Ashdown Forest has seen an increase in visitor numbers, that car parks need repairing, the County Council is no longer making up the budget shortfall, staffing has been reduced to ten members, parking charges are being considered and parish and town councils will be asked to support the Forest work. An online meeting will take place this week and is open to all.

TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from councillors.

TO RECEIVE SUCH COMMUNICATIONS AS THE TOWN MAYOR MAY WISH TO LAY BEFORE THE COUNCIL

To note the Town Mayor's engagements

The Mayor's engagements were noted.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the acts and proceedings of the following committee meetings

It was noted that the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of 7th September 2021 had been agreed for amendment; these were therefore removed from the list of minutes for approval.

The following committee minutes were received and noted:

Allotments and Cemeteries	– 20 th July 2021
Personnel	– 7 th September 2021
Planning and Development	– 6 th and 27 th September 2021
Sport and Recreation	– 10 th August 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

9574 RESOLVED to approve the Financial Regulations (resolution number 9500) as recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee

9575 RESOLVED to approve the Risk Management Policy and Register (resolution number 9501) as recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee

One member raised concerns that the Health and Safety Policy recommended by the Personnel Committee was badly written and not fit for purpose.

9576 RESOLVED to approve the Health and Safety Policy and Arrangements (resolution number 9541) as recommended by the Personnel Committee.

One member of the public online left the meeting.

TO AUTHORISE THE SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

Grants of Exclusive Right of Burial

9577 RESOLVED to authorise the following Grants of Exclusive Right of Burial:

CERTIFICATE	NAME	GRAVE SPACE
Q1136	Dee Tormey & Rebecca Cooper	3592
Q1137	Penny Tester	GRH165 & GRH166
Q1138	Robert Watkins	GRH159 & GRH160

COMMUNITY WARDEN

To note the presentation by the Community Warden

The Mayor informed members that the Community Warden was unwell and not able to attend the meeting. It was agreed to invite him to give his presentation at a future meeting.

In response to a member's question, the Town Clerk confirmed that the Community Warden patrols all areas of the town including Jarvis Brook and Alderbrook.

PINE GROVE

To note the officer's report on the building

Members considered the quotes supplied for the window cleaning service.

9578 RESOLVED to accept the quote provided by Company 1 at an annual cost of £3,960

Councillors discussed the difficulty with obtaining quotes for the building cleaning and the issue of the contracted company not turning up to carry out work on leaks in the building. It was noted that the sewer inspection hatch is located within the internal corridor for the council offices. It was agreed to investigate costs for relocating this hatch to the outer wall.

To note the financial report and agree any action

The financial report was noted.

To note the CONFIDENTIAL finance report and update

The Mayor moved this item to the end of the agenda due to the confidential nature of the item to be discussed.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To elect substitute members to the Planning and Development Committee

The Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee informed the council that there are now only six members on the committee, and it may struggle to be quorate if some members are unable to attend. The Council was asked to approve substitute members of the Planning and Development Committee.

One member of the press left the meeting.

9579 RESOLVED to elect Cllr Colin Stocks and Cllr Natalie Whittle as substitute members of the Planning and Development Committee

FINANCIAL MATTERS

To note all payments made in September including any through petty cash

A councillor noted that there was a code discrepancy on a payment for site assessments on 10th September 2021. The payments for September were noted.

One member of the public left the meeting.

To agree disposal of fixed assets as recommended by F&GP committee

9580 RESOLVED to dispose of the fixed assets as recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee

To note update on monies received through CiL

The CiL monies were noted.

To note the external auditors report and comments

The external auditor had had no comments to make. The external auditors report and comments were noted.

To note Q3 performance participation certification

The Quarter 3 performance participation certification was noted.

URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING AND/OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

The Mayor informed members that the co-option of new councillors was scheduled for 26th January 2022. The Co-Option Awareness video will be shot on 16th November 2021 and will include a section filmed at the Environment Committee meeting. Members of this committee who had not yet responded to the officer regarding early attendance were asked to do so.

Members were reminded that various training courses are available for councillors. Alternatively, bespoke training courses are possible. Any councillors interested in courses or with training needs that may require bespoke training should contact the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk for more information.

It was noted that the latest information on the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment is available on the Wealden District Council website. The Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee agreed to include this as an agenda item for the next meeting.

PINE GROVE

To note the CONFIDENTIAL finance report and update

9581 RESOLVED pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reasons of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted and they were asked to leave.

The confidential finance report was discussed.

9582 RESOLVED to authorise officers to obtain legal advice and commence appropriate enforcement action if payment is not received from the tenant by 12th November 2021

The meeting closed at 9.20pm