



Crowborough's Year



2023-2024

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CROWBOROUGH ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Wednesday 24th April 2024 at 7.30pm

UNITED REFORM CHURCH, CROFT ROAD

AGENDA

1. To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 1st March 2023
2. To note the presentation from The Friends of Crowborough Hospital
3. To note the receipt of the Town Mayor's report
4. To note the receipt of reports from Nus Ghani MP, East Sussex County Councillors, Wealden District Councillors, and the Chairmen of Crowborough Town Council committees
5. To note the receipt of a report from a group with town council representation
6. Questions received for councillors

Councillor Matthew Street
Town Mayor
15th April 2024

***The Meeting is persuasive only and resolutions are not binding upon
Crowborough Town Council except in relation to the provision of allotments***

Minutes of a meeting of the 118th **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY** of the Local Electors of the Parish of Crowborough held at the United Church, Croft Road, Crowborough on Wednesday 1st March 2023 at 7.30pm

Town Councillors Present:

Alison Arthur	Richard Jury	Neil Waller*
Peter Bucklitsch	Kay Moss*	Natalie Whittle
Mike Cooke	David Neeves	
Suzanne Dixon	Gareth Owen Williams*	
Martyn Everitt	Alan Penney	
Martyn Garrett	Matthew Street	

*Denotes those also WDC Councillors

WDC Councillors present: Cllr Richard Hallett

ESCC Councillors present: Cllr Johanna Howell

Cllr Philip Lunn * Also WDC Councillor.

In attendance:

Caroline Miles

Town Clerk

Mia Kelly

Events Manager

22 members of the public

Crowborough Town Councillors, ESCC Councillors and WDC Councillors held 'surgery time' prior to the formal meeting in order to enable residents to ask them questions individually.

MAYORS CHARITIES – PRESENTATION OF CHEQUES

The Mayor welcomed all those present and thanked them for attending.

The Mayor presented representatives from his two chosen charities (Crowborough Foodbank and Grove Park School) with cheques for the monies raised during his Mayoral term of office.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

CTC Cllr George Moss

TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20th APRIL 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2022 were approved.

MR MICHAEL COOKE – CROWBOROUGH FOODBANK

Mr Cooke thanked all those who had donated and supported the foodbank as without their generosity Crowborough Food bank would not be able to help those who suffered from food poverty in Crowborough.

The Crowborough food bank was set up in 2014 by Freda Robinson from a garage and a shed. In a few years the foodbank moved to the United Church before moving to its present home, Barnsgate Manor.

The foodbank relies on its 114 volunteers who carry out a range of jobs from weighing, dating, and packing food, administrative work, through to making deliveries.

Crowborough Foodbank relies on income from grants and cash donations. Food alone cost the charity £5000 last year.

In 2014 Crowborough foodbank supplied 3,618 meals for 402 people. In 2022 it supplied 51,606 meals for 5,734 for local people. With food poverty on the increase the foodbank is a vital service for people in need.

People can donate food to the foodbank and there is a 'wishlist' on the Crowborough Foodbank website for those who wish to give.

The Mayor thanked Michael Cooke for the informative talk.

TO NOTE THE RECEIPT OF REPORTS OF TRUSTEES/GROUPS WITH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

The reports were noted and received by the meeting.

TO NOTE THE RECEIPT OF THE TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

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

TO NOTE THE RECEIPT OF REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

The reports were noted and received by the meeting.

OPEN FORUM – QUESTIONS FOR COUNCILLORS

Questions were invited from those present.

Q: The Allotments and Cemeteries Committee report mentions the environmental value of council land. How is the council moving forward with this?

A: The council is keen to do what it can to reduce its use of fossil fuels. Unfortunately the solar farm idea at Owlsbury is unlikely to come to fruition as the cost to install is around £275,000.

The council is currently exploring conducting a feasibility study into council buildings in order to reduce its Co2 emissions.

The council has already made changes to the way it manages its land, and it is preparing a climate change policy which will cement further changes.

- Q: Will there be toilets on Wolfe recreation Ground?
- A: The Sport and Recreation Committee will be replacing the Pavilion with a new eco Community/Sports building and the plan will include toilets.
- Q: Is there an update on the Vision Document?
- A: The Vision Document is in progress and regular meetings are being held. Residents are being encouraged to complete a survey which will help form the Vision Document.
- Q: What is the Vision Document?
- A: The Vision Document is a short, medium, and long-term vision for Crowborough. It will reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. That is why completing the survey is so important.
- Q: How have residents been informed about the survey; many residents are unaware it is being carried out. There is nothing in the retail outlets in Crowborough.
- A: The survey is on the front page of the website, has been advertised on Ashdown Radio, F/b, and Twitter. Hard copies are in the council offices. The closing date for completion is the 19th March due to the pre-publicity period for the local elections in May. Once the data is produced it will be analysed and it will form part of the Vision Document.
- Q: Can this date be extended as not enough people know about the survey in the town and the 19th March is only two weeks away.
- A: The survey closes on the 19th March, but the new council could re-start the survey after May.
- Q: What is the council's vision for Crowborough?
- A: The Vision document is split into aims; A thriving Town Centre. Protecting the natural environment. A vibrant victor destination. Effective and sustainable transport. Supporting business and enterprise. Engaging with Crowborough's young people and Sport, leisure, and wellbeing. The Vision Document working group is then looking at what it would like to achieve under each of the aims. The results of the survey will help the Council to do that.
- Q: In 2019 the climate change policy was started. When will the policy be completed? Why has it taken so long? What measures has the Council put in place to become a zero-carbon council?

A: The climate change policy working group submitted a policy to Full Council in 2021 but it was rejected due to cost and complexity. Creating the policy is a democratic process and everyone's views need to be taken into account.
The latest situation is that the working group has used that policy and are working towards making it user friendly, practical, and more palatable.
The council has already taken steps to change the way it operates in terms of how it manages its green space, how it recycles etc.
The council is replacing the old pavilion on Wolfe Recreation Ground with an eco community building which will be self-sufficient. A feasibility study into the council's buildings is being considered which will ultimately help to reduce the council's energy consumption.

Q: What is the direction of travel of the climate change policy?

A: The policy will look at how the council delivers practical, measurable, and deliverable changes in areas such as transport, energy, procurement, and waste management.

Q: There has been work carried out to the station in Crowborough but a lack of trains. Public transport generally is in decline. There are housing developments that are being built in Crowborough but with no increase in employment opportunities, this creates a lot of commuters. This is self-defeating in terms of the environment as it is pushing people into cars. People are being brought into Crowborough, but nothing is being done to help people to work here. What is the Town Council doing to exert their influence in terms of public transport and housing?

A: The Town Council does not have any control over transport, it can only encourage those who have power to take on board its views. The Town Council has opposed all of the major developments in the town on the grounds of lack of employment opportunities and the decline in public transport. It has been over-ruled every time. WDC, on rejecting a large development in the town lost to an appeal and was fined.

Q: Does the council have a commitment to maintain and develop biodiversity in the town?

A: Yes. The country parks, the playing fields and Crowborough's green spaces are all being looked at as part of the climate change policy.

There being no further questions the Mayor closed the meeting and thanked people for attending.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.



Crowborough Town Council
Council and Committee Attendance
1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

NAME	NUMBER ATTENDED	NUMBER EXPECTED
Cllr Alison Arthur	18	23
Cllr Peter Bucklitsch	20	23
Cllr Jane Clark	16	21
Cllr Suzanne Dixon	25	29
Cllr Martyn Everitt	47	53
Cllr Martyn Garrett	48	50
Cllr Paul Goddard	3	10
Cllr David Hedges	14	22
Cllr Richard Jury	43	45
Cllr Kay Moss	53	58
Cllr Beverly Pashley	13	15
Cllr Alan Penney	30	35
Cllr Simon Ryder	18	25
Cllr Matthew Street	43	53
Cllr Neil Waller	16	20
Cllr Natalie Whittle	53	56

In addition to attending Council and Committee meetings, councillors also represent the Town Council on various outside groups or organisations and attend numerous additional meetings.

REPORT FROM NUS GHANI, MP

A message from Nusrat Ghani Member of Parliament for Wealden

It has been another very busy year for me and my local team, with lots of visits supporting businesses old and new, our fantastic charities and their volunteers, healthcare facilities, care homes, and our schools. Over the past twelve months, my office responded to over 10,000 casework and policy emails and letters and provided assistance with over 4,800 individual cases. I take every opportunity to campaign to secure more funding for Wealden, and the below are just some of the successes and work that has been done to support Crowborough throughout the past year.

I'm incredibly proud to have helped secure multi-million-pound support from the Government for building safety improvements at Beacon Academy. The latest round of funding announced in March will help with heating replacement and comes in addition to the £1.5m secured in 2023 for fire alarm system upgrades, and the £1.3m received in 2021 for improvements to the Sixth Form Centre. This much-needed boost will ensure that students can thrive in an improved environment and better facilities.



Following £4.7m investment from the Department for Transport's Access for All scheme, I was delighted to officially open the newly refurbished Crowborough train station, which has undergone accessibility improvements including the installation of two lifts and a brand-new footbridge, making Crowborough train station fully step-free and accessible to all.

I continue working with our Chambers of Commerce and in September 2023, I was delighted to host Google coaches at the Crowborough Rugby Club for a whole day of free workshops and mentoring sessions designed to help local enterprises boost their digital skills, grow their presence online, and expand their customer outreach. Over 30 organisations got involved and the event was hugely successful.



Together with Friends of Crowborough Hospital, I continue to support the Minor Injuries Unit and the Birthing Unit, which are both much-valued community assets. I was pleased to welcome Sussex NHS leaders to the site for discussions on improving the delivery of primary care and emergency services in Wealden, opportunities for expansion of current provision, and ensuring that the existing facilities are being used to their full potential.

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

Cllr Johanna Howell and Cllr Philip Lunn

East Sussex County Councillors

The main question that we are asked is about highways. We cannot pretend that this has been a good year and although we have 30 teams out on the roads, the weather has been the wettest since 1837. We would also like to reassure you that we drive the same roads and get the same burst tyres, all of which is no comfort. That said, we are constantly working on your behalf to bring issues to the attention of our stewards, our contractors, and the Director with responsibility for highways.

Apart from highways, East Sussex is the corporate parent for over 300 children, some of whom have very complex needs. Our children services were visited by OFSTED this year and were judged an overall 'good', but 'outstanding' for our looked after children. The report praised the strong and effective support given to our most vulnerable children and praised the dedication of our social workers.

ESCC is also running a campaign calling for more Foster Carers - we need people from across the county - so if you are interested, please get in touch.

The fiscal responsibilities of the council with regards to children services has been very tough this year. This is a statutory duty which has put a great deal of pressure on council finances. And one which the Public in general, is oblivious to.

We have run working groups - looking in and trying to find solutions to increased truancy from school. We had some very insightful conversations with young people who had been permanently excluded from school, and what could have been done better. We visited several schools to see how they coped with these difficult and complex cases and took some heart, but also some worries away. But that said we are looking for solutions and considering various ways forward.

We also have Adult Social Care, and this has been a very interesting year. We are looking at alternative ways of helping our ageing population, of which East Sussex has the highest percentage in the Country. It is a massive area, funding wise. Consequently, our search for ever better solutions is perennial.

Loneliness in the elderly is an increasing concern, Nationally, as well as locally. Those concerns include Healthy Aging. Age itself is not the root cause. It is better to say, that at whatever point a person is within their senior years, a healthy body and healthy mind are the key considerations, and as a caring local authority, our endeavours never cease to find a spectrum of solutions to suit our population.

WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT

Cllr Alison Arthur – Crowborough South West

Cllr Jane Clark – Crowborough Central

Cllr Martyn Everitt – Crowborough St Johns

Cllr Gareth Owen-Williams – Crowborough Jarvis Brook

Cllr James Partridge – Crowborough North

Cllr Andrew Wilson – Crowborough South East

Wealden District Councillors

1 Introduction

This is a report on the activities of Wealden District Council (**WDC**) for the year to 31 March 2024.

It's not possible to cover everything which has happened. The best, reasonably short, source of information are the portfolio holder updates to the regular meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee which are available on WDC's website under the "Councillors and Committees" tab.

2 Change of control of WDC

The elections in May 2023 resulted in control of WDC passing from the Conservative Group to the Alliance for Wealden which was formed by the Liberal Democrat and Green members.

3 Council Strategy

The first important task was to set a new direction for WDC. This is set out in the Council Strategy, which was adopted by the Council on 22 November and is rooted in what local people told us during the election campaign.

The Vision is for Wealden "**to be a place where people and nature thrive**".

The three priorities for achieving this are:

- protecting our environment and leading the district to carbon neutrality.
- building strong, mutually supporting communities which are actively engaged in their own future.
- a growing economy which enables people to live well.

4 Delivering

In May, people voted for change: they voted for control of development, better infrastructure, and an end to potholes.

Over development: we have moved a Local Plan forward by a significant step in order to get more control of development. More detail below.

Potholes: along with others, we lobbied East Sussex County Council about the roads, including passing a full council motion and meeting their Leader. They have increased their roads budget for the next few years and there is anecdotal evidence that this extra money is coming through. Crowborough's infamous roundabout is now very smooth!

Water infrastructure: South East Water came to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, among other things, apologised for the water outage in May 2023 and undertook to improve their emergency response. During a water outage in and around Alfriston in February, they reacted much more promptly than in May-June 2023, which may be a sign that our pressure on them is having an effect.

OFWAT (the water utility regulator) have agreed to work with us to improve Southern Water's performance. As far as we know, this is a unique agreement.

Climate Change: we are creating a new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan which faces up to our environmental challenges and will build resilience across the district.

Crowborough:

We have:

- obtained planning permission to build business units in Farningham Road to help meet demand from local businesses.
- approved a grant of £38,713 towards the cost of refurbishing the Sports Hall at Goldsmiths.
- approved a grant of £600,000 from the CIL levy to replace Beacon Community College's Astroturf hockey pitch, on condition it is made available to the whole community.

5 Draft Local Plan out for public consultation

Voters told us to get control of development in Wealden. We quickly confirmed our view that the only way to do this is to put a Local Plan in place. Work began in July 2023, and, on 8 February 2024, the Council approved a draft Local Plan to go out for public consultation.

As it says in its Introduction, it "will help to meet the district's needs and priorities, whilst protecting our natural and physical environments". The difficulty of achieving this balance cannot be overstated. Everyone can help with this by taking part in the public consultation, which started on 15th March. It is just as important to make positive comments as negative ones.

All comments made must be collated and recorded for legal reasons. To find details of how to take part, go to <https://consult.wealden.gov.uk/kse/> and click "GO TO EVENT".

6 The Budget

A vital stage in the council's annual cycle is the adoption of a budget for the next financial year. The Council approved the Alliance's proposed budget for 2024 - 2025 on 22 February. It is a conservative budget with a small "c". The Alliance is determined to preserve the strong financial position which the Council has, but we believe that the CIL and reserves which have been accumulated should be used for the benefit of Wealden and not just left in the bank to accumulate interest and be eroded by inflation.

The Council has therefore recently made several decisions to spend money on sports facilities. This includes a fund to be used to improve existing sports pitches, most of which are owned by town or parish councils or local schools and so are close to the grass roots sports clubs. The basis for this is contained in a very detailed study and action plan prepared by experts in this field.

We have also reached agreement with the other contracting parties to keep the swimming pool at Uckfield Leisure Centre open for another 4 years at least.

7 Peer Review

The Local Government Association provides a peer review service for councils, under which members and officers from other councils carry out a three-day visit to assess various aspects of a council's activities and services and recommend changes, if needed.

WDC underwent a peer review in the last week of February 2024. The formal report is to follow, but the immediate feedback was that WDC is a well-run, highly performing council that has a strong financial base and healthy reserves. The review team particularly commented on how dedicated and proud to work for WDC staff are and that people really enjoy working at WDC. There is a real desire to do right for Wealden.

8 Conclusion

The Alliance has put in place a strategy for WDC which is designed to deliver on the mandate which we were given and WDC is well placed to deliver it in the coming months. We look forward to reporting accordingly at your meeting in 2025.

TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

A message from the Mayor Cllr Matthew Street



It has been a huge honour being elected Mayor of Crowborough – a town I have loved since moving here in 2007. I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as a town councillor since I was first elected in 2010 and, with elections in May 2023, it was wonderful to welcome some new councillors to the team.

The role of Mayor has three key components:

First is to chair Full Council Meetings. As a council, we have discussed and made decisions on a large number of topics this year. We have re-committed to being a Fairtrade town, continued to build the town's revised Vision document, established a process to create a new business plan and supported a plan to look at creating a Youth Ambassador Board. We also co-opted additional councillors through two rounds of co-options where the quality of all the candidates was very high.

The second aspect is to represent the town at Civic events. This year I have presented Sewing Crow-Bees with a Civic Award for their outstanding contribution to the town by raising thousands of pounds for good causes, as well as creating some wonderful crochet works around town.



It was also a pleasure to hand out nearly 60 Duke of Edinburgh awards to Beacon students, present awards at Friends of Crowborough Hospital AGM, as well as awards at Beacon Academy annual awards ceremony.

Our town has a very active Veterans and Supporters Association, and it was a great honour to be with them at a number of events including Armed Forces Day, Armistice Day, Remembrance Day and the Service of Commemoration at The Bricklayers Arms.

It was delightful to open new town council facilities this year such as our new Pocket Park and bike track on Goldsmiths, and other facilities such as Crowborough's Tennis Association's new Padel Tennis court and a commemorative bench on Chapel Green.



In August, I enjoyed formally opening the annual Crowborough Hospital Fete and in September, the Crowborough Bonfire and Carnival - both well attended local events. As a council we also organise some excellent events - it was an honour to speak at our Christmas Cracker and read at our Christmas Civic Carol Service, for example. I have enjoyed sharing information about what the council does on two Ashdown Radio interviews and speaking to over 60 primary school children at Ashdown School. I was also delighted to visit Woodland's Care home a couple of times - the last giving some flowers to resident who had reached the grand age of 107 years old.

Please do invite the Mayor to any suitable events you are arranging. Full details can be found on the council's website www.crowboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk

The third is to raise money for local charities. I am delighted to be supporting the Friends of Crowborough Hospital and 1st Crowborough Scout Group as the Mayor's charities this year.

I hope to support Friends of Crowborough Hospital by raising enough money to purchase some much-needed equipment for their very popular birthing centre - supporting over 600 women every year.

Money raised will also support 1st Crowborough Scouts in their work maintaining their headquarters building which over 250 local young people benefit from using every year.

I really enjoyed having a small cameo part in the Crowborough Players' wonderful panto "The Three Musketeers" and raised nearly £600. It was also very special being at the 10th anniversary of Pine Grove Pictures where we raised over £200. Through other initiatives as well we have raised over £6000 so far this year.

I would like to finish by thanking all the council staff who give so much to the town under the leadership of Caroline Miles, Town Clerk. I would also like to thank my Deputy Mayor, Cllr Natalie Whittle, for her support and attending many events in the service of the town. Every councillor volunteers their time, energy, and skill for the good of Crowborough and I am thankful for their service.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Allotments and Cemeteries Committee Report Chairperson – Cllr Kay Moss



Allotments

The committee explored using an area at Owlsbury underneath a pylon and cables for a solar array. Further enquires found that the cost of connectivity to the grid is so high that this is not currently a viable proposition. Hopefully these charges will reduce in the future and the council will look at this again.

It had been agreed to plant a hedge at Herne as part of the Queens Green Canopy, however it was found that this would encroach on plots on the site. It was therefore agreed to plant this hedge at Owlsbury. We then agreed to put in a wire fence along the post and rail fence at Herne to give the plot holders more security.

The committee have decided to hold an Allotment competition in 2024. The categories will be:

Best Kept Allotment

Ecological Award

Childrens Award

Overall Winner

A £25 National Garden Centre voucher will be awarded for each category. A plaque will be installed at Pine Grove listing the winners and a plaque to be placed on each winning plot.



The charges for plots for 2025/2026 have been set:

Half plot at Owlsbury £20

Extra Large plots at Owlsbury £160

Standard plots on all sites £40

As previous years those receiving certain benefits will be given a reduction.

Cemeteries

Sadly, there have been a number of cases of vandalism at Herne this year. This has resulted in the chapel doors having to be replaced and an alarm system installed.

Summersales Cemetery is progressing well with the contemplation building nearing completion. An interpretation board for the site has been commissioned along with curved benches for the children's area. The committee decided to hold a competition to produce a sculpture which will be central to this Children's area. We expect to officially open this site later this year.

I would like to thank the Deputy Clerk for her work with the committee and the grounds staff for their work in making sure that all our sites are maintained and looking their best.

Communications and Events Committee Report

Chairperson – Cllr Martyn Garrett

Despite the weather trying everything possible to disrupt the Crowborough Town Council's events over the past year, through the combined efforts of the Council's Staff, the list of events survived entirely intact and, in most cases, almost as they were planned. I should therefore like to begin this report by thanking all those concerned for continuously going that extra mile, whatever the conditions.



King's Coronation



Based loosely on the format of the successful CrowFest 2022 event, the 6th May 2023 started in heavy rain which seemed to get heavier as the day went on. Thankfully our entertainers were well protected during their performances on stage or within the large marquee. It was therefore remarkable how many members of the public continued to turn up throughout the day. It was a particularly good turn out to hear the Choir of Sir Henry Fermor School taking part in the opening performance, even

though there was no shelter immediately in front of the stage. As the event continued, even the grass under the protection of the marquee turned to mud, and yet people still turned up with their picnic baskets to share hospitality on the long table provided, whilst watching the children's entertainment, including a traditional Punch and Judy Show. It was still raining when last act appeared (an excellent duo doing some well-known standards), and it only seemed to brighten up a little bit (ironically) for the fireworks display at the end. It was at this point that I noticed that the chair I had been sitting on in the marquee had been slowly sinking into the ground. My apologies to whoever had to dig it out.

Summer Fair

For the Summer Fair on 15th July 2023 it was decided to use the Eridge Field, which runs alongside the Goldsmiths car park. In the days leading up to the event, the weather forecasters started warning about the possibility of strong & disruptive winds in the South, and by Friday morning, it became clear that the warnings would need to be taken seriously. Accordingly, it was decided that the main marquee, bouncy castles, and gazebos should not be erected on the day (interestingly, the Goodwood Festival of Speed organisers decided to cancel their event entirely). Whilst these changes meant a reduced programme, it still left a sizable number of attractions available, including the main event of the opening by the Mayor of the new Pump Cycle Track and exhibition cyclists. On the day, the very high winds remained on the South Coast, and it was particularly pleasing to see many of the stallholders (minus their gazebos) arriving in vans and treating the Summer Fair like a car boot sale. Plans

are now being drawn up to improve the Eridge Field so it may become the event field it was originally intended to be.

Firework Display

Following the disappointment of having to cancel the November 2022 Fireworks Display due to an under water public area, it was with some relief that despite more rain, the battle was won to hold the event planned for 4th November 2023. The Staff were determined it would go ahead and with the use of tarpaulin, pallets, and specialist machinery they triumphed against seemingly ceaseless days of rain. Even more remarkable the rain stopped for 20 minutes during the display, and then immediately returned at the end. The Firework Display also marked the return of a traditional Beacon.

Other Events

The “Christmas Cracker” was cold but dry, and unbelievably well attended and this year’s Christmas Lights were very well received. The Boundary Walk has continued with its staggered start begun during COVID-19 restrictions and this year participants were asked to bring their own water, to help the Town Council meet its target on plastic waste. Sussex Day continues to be developed as an event and both Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday, falling at the weekend attracted bumper crowds at Chapel Green. The Civic Carol Service on 7th December 2023 at All Saints Church is now so popular that late arrivals had to stand at the back.

2024 Events Programme

The big news for 2024 is the return of CrowFest. The original event in 2022 was only supposed to be a one-off event, to see off the end of COVID-19, but with about 10,000 people in attendance over the two-day event and large support for something similar, the Council has decided in 2024 to arrange what is being billed as a mini-CrowFest. Don’t be fooled by the title mini-CrowFest. It will only be mini in that it is being held on the one day as an alternative to the Summer Fair. A great programme is promised, as is with the rest of the 2024 events programme, scheduled as follows:

- 24th April - Town Conference
- 5th May - Boundary Walk
- 6th June - D Day 80th Year Commemoration
- 16th June - Sussex Day
- 29th June - Armed Forces Day
- 13th July - Mini-CrowFest
- 5th November - Firework Night
- 10th November - Remembrance Sunday
- 11th November - Armistice Day
- 29th November - Christmas Cracker
- 5th December - Civic Carol Service

Environment Committee Report

Chairperson - Cllr Martyn Everitt



I was honoured to take over as Chair of the Environment Committee after the elections in May 2023. The committee is responsible for 2 nature reserves and 3 other amenity areas, managed by our Warden and ground staff. It also has responsibility for street furniture (bus stops, , signs and bins), transport, CCTV, street lighting and our beautiful year-round floral displays.

The grass verges are normally cut twice a year and we continue to liaise with the county council to request the cuts are made earlier in the year. Some areas are intentionally left to encourage biodiversity, a balance with the need to maintain visibility on junctions is mostly achieved.

Hard work restoring the ground of the Pocket Park resulted in this being opened this spring, a beautiful haven for birds and wildlife. This adds to Bluebell Wood, Palesgate Lane meadow and the Country Park and The Ghyll nature reserves.

The Climate Change Policy was adopted and has been fully implemented affecting most of the council's activities. The opportunities for solar panels and air source heating are being actively progressed.

Concerns about the amount of E.coli that had been found in all our Crowborough streams had been raised with Southern Water, they have plans for upgrade, but time scales are very long.

The council is also in the process of converting the public bins to dual bins to increase recycling.

During the year the committee has also been reviewing and discussing CCTV in the town.

The Council continues to support Wealdlink which provides a valuable service to neighbouring villages and a personal shopping service for the community.

The committee confirmed its support of a 20mph speed limit across the town, with the exception of the A26. At the present time this item will not be moving forward but will be reviewed annually .The proposed closure of the train station ticket office was not implemented because of considerable opposition from the public and interested bodies.

A successful year and I'm grateful for all the contributions of fellow Councillors and the hard work of the Towns Officers.

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Cllr Neil Waller

Chairperson, Finance and General Purposes Committee



The Financial and General Purposes Committee is responsible for:

- The corporate management of the Council and administrative services including accounting services, audit, accommodation, legal services, and servicing of loans
- The Council's Standing Orders, financial procedures, and risk management
- The democratic representation of the Council including elections, members' allowances, and the Mayors Fund

During 2023/2024 the Committee workplan included

Policies Reviewed

- Freedom of Information Policy
- Publication Scheme Policy
- Financial Regulations
- Investment Policy
- Document Retention Policy
- Grant Awarding Policy
- Members Allowances Policy

Financial Oversight and Governance

- Bi-monthly review and noting of income and expenditure and earmarked reserves
- Review of payroll provider
- AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return approval recommended to Full Council
- Reviewed and noted the internal auditor's reports. These highlighted no significant control issues at the Council
- Reviewed and noted the external auditors report. This highlighted no significant accounting or control issues at the Council
- Engaged a VAT consultant to provide best advice regarding the construction of the new Wolfe Pavilion
- Reviewed and noted the Councils loan position with the PWLB (Public Works Loan Board)
- Recommended Precept to Full Council. A 5% increase to £1678041, representing an additional £8.96 for a band D property

Asset upgrades

- Agreed to purchase asset inventory software
- Agreed to move to a cloud-based server and purchase tablets for Councillors to use

Grant Funding and SLA's (Service Level Agreements)

- SLA's to Clued up and CAB of £25k each with 3-year rolling agreement were approved
- Many local organisations received Council grant funding to support projects with Crowborough

Other

- Agreed insurance renewal
- Agreed a new investment into the CCLA. This provides a far higher return to the Council than can be achieved through bank deposit accounts or money market deposits

Basepoint

- The Council is now receiving a quarterly profit share of £25k-£30k. This is in addition to quarterly rental of £15k and the recharge of utilities costs

Thank you to the work of the Committee, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer during 2023/2024

Planning and Development Committee Report

Chairman – Cllr Richard Jury



2023-2024 has been another challenging year for the planning committee as the volume of applications has remained at a high level despite the difficult economic climate.

The most pressing issue in planning locally remains a lack of an up to date, district wide Local Plan for Wealden. The draft version of the new plan has now been published following the change in administration at the district council last spring, but it is still some way off being implemented as there are a number of legal hurdles and tests that it still needs to satisfy before it can be relied upon. This coupled with a lack of a 5-year housing supply leaves the whole district, including Crowborough, vulnerable. The number of developable locations within the town for larger numbers of houses appears on the face of it to be more limited going forward due to the developments which have already been approved but in recent years a number of locations have been unexpectedly approved.

Furthermore unless national policy is to change it is likely that Crowborough will continue to see more houses being constructed for the foreseeable future. It remains to be seen what effect if any the pending general election may have on housing and/or planning policy. The town council will continue to oppose development that we do not feel is in Crowborough's best interests and seek to mitigate as best as we can, the effects of any such development that are subsequently approved in site of opposition.

Whilst new larger developments have not been as numerous in the last twelve months there has been a sizable number of small but still multi property applications that are complex to deal with and are often unpopular with neighbours due to the fact that they often seek to replace a single older property with multiple houses on the same plot. Resubmissions of previously rejected applications without any meaningful revisions remain a source of frustration for both the committee and affected residents creating ongoing uncertainty for those involved. On a more positive note there is to be development taking place on the Farningham Road industrial estate of extra commercial units proving more business and employment opportunities on land that would not be suitable for alternative use.

Staff shortages at the district council planning department has been causing a number of issues, not least, planning enforcement. There is nothing directly that the town council can do to address this which is unfortunate as it is leading to a number of problems for those living near developments in progress where planning conditions are not being enforced. The staffing situation has improved however in the last year and is now heading in the right direction. The town council will continue to report to planning enforcement any suspected breaches of planning control.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the committee for their diligence and the invaluable support from the town hall staff, especially as this is the committee that meets by far the most frequently.

Sport and Recreation Committee Report

Chairperson – Cllr Kay Moss



Jarvis Brook Recreation Ground

We have agreed to re-negotiate the lease of the recreation ground with Wealden District Council to take account of Artytime wishing to extend their scrapstore building.

We have agreed to allow Wealden District Council to hold Our Parks free exercise classes at the recreation ground. The classes are for all abilities and are delivered by a qualified instructor every Monday and Thursday at 9.30am.

The Council agreed to use £100,000 CiL funds to refurbish the playground. Tenders were reviewed in January and a design was chosen. We are delighted that work on the new playground will start in the next few months, and it is hoped it will be ready to for use this summer.

Goldsmiths Recreation Ground

The Bike track project was finally completed and has proved to be a great success with the young bike and scooter riders of the town. We have also now installed picnic tables in this area following a request from a member of the public.

We supported the Crowborough Rotary Club with their “End Polio Now” initiative, allowing them to plant crocus bulbs on the bank adjacent to the miniature railway and to install a plaque.

Wolfe Recreation Ground

We are still exploring different options to replace the Pavilion at Wolfe. £400,000 of CiL money has been earmarked towards this project by the Council.

After a bench donated by the Crowborough Lions was vandalised, our grounds staff spent time repairing it and reinstalled it, however sadly this was then stolen.

We have refurbished the works yard and staff accommodation at Wolfe ensuring our grounds staff have up to date facilities.

Alderbrook Playing Fields

We agreed to amend the lease with Crowborough Athletic Football Clun to allow them to sublet the football pitches for football base activities.

Lime Kiln Football Pitches

We agreed to Jarvis Brook Football Club’s request for them to erect a chain link fence along the forest boundary of pitches 2 and 3.

Junior Football

The Council have entered an agreement with the Football Foundation for funding to improve our junior football pitches.

Chapel Green

The Crowborough and District Veteran and Supporters Association (CDVSA) approached the council to ask if they could fund a bench to be installed at Chapel Green in memory of RAF pilot Donald James Catt who died crashing into the house known as Cranford on Chapel Green, Miss Ella Coomber who was the maid companion of the house and Neville Stone BEM a long time member of the Royal British Legion and CDVSA. The bench has recently been installed and a presentation ceremony held.

As always, a big thank you to our grounds team who keep our sports and recreation grounds looking their best and well maintained, and the office team for their support to the committee.

DEMENTIA ALLIANCE REPORT



The Crowborough Dementia Forum is made up of members from various local organisations, businesses, and voluntary groups. The aim of the group is to promote awareness of dementia and make Crowborough a dementia friendly place to live in.

We run a Community Café on the last Thursday of each month at the Oasis Community Church 2 – 4 pm. This is open to anyone. At each of these café events there will be an activity or entertainment. Recently there has been a chair games afternoon and on another occasion a group singing sea shanties. Tea/coffee and cake are always available too. These café afternoons are well attended. The forum has worked with the Friends of Crowborough Hospital to use the Friends mini bus to ferry people from Mayfield to attend these afternoons. This is an opportunity for those who may be isolated to meet up and enjoy a chat and some entertainment.

We have a Sporting Memories group which meets on the first Monday of each month 11.00 – 12.30 again at the Oasis Community Church. This is a friendly and welcoming group where people can reminisce about either playing or watching sport. For more information about this club please contact Emma Brooke emma.brooke@sussexcricket.co.uk

Pine Grove Pictures have dementia friendly showings of “Golden Oldies” at the Crowborough Community Centre. The following are being shown this year:

14th May It’s a Wonderful Life

24th September The Pink Panther

19th November West Side Story

All films start at 1.30pm with the doors open from 1.00pm.

All the above activities are free and for anyone to attend.

We have also recently held a dementia training session for local businesses, and anyone interested in finding out more about dementia and living with someone with it. Anyone interested in attending a training session should contact Amanda Hodge amanda.hodge@sussexhousing.org.uk

Cllr Kay Moss

Crowborough Town Council Representative – Wealden Dementia Alliance



FREE event

Wealden
Dementia Action Alliance

Crowborough Community Café



Oasis Community Church
Beacon Road, TN6 1AS

**Last Thursday of the month
2pm till 4pm**

- ✿ A free community cafe with entertainment and activities for local people.
- ✿ Free refreshments and activities
- ✿ Everyone welcome

Contact us:
 @ wellbeing@wealden.gov.uk
 ☎ 01323 443322

🐦 @wealdendistrict 📷 @wealdenc
 📘 Friends of Wealden Dementia Action Alliance

 Wealden District Council Rotary Club of  Crowborough



Five Ash Down Community Café

Hurstwood View Care Home, Linum Lane,
Five Ash Down, East Sussex TN22 3FH.



**Last Wednesday of the month
10am till 12noon**

Free refreshments and activities

Transport available within 5 mile radius, please contact us to book as spaces for transport are limited.

Contact information:
hurstwoodview@barchester.com
 Phone number: 01825 731700



FOUNDATION

Crowborough SPORTING MEMORIES

DATE & TIMINGS
First Monday of the month 11am - 12.30pm
Excluding Bank Holidays

AGE
50 years and over

COST
Free

WHAT TO EXPECT
A friendly and welcoming environment to reminisce about either playing or watching sport.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
emma.brooke@sussexcricket.co.uk



VENUE
The Oasis, Crowborough Community Church, Beacon Road, TN6 1AS



sussexcricket.co.uk/sporting-memories