

Minutes of a meeting of the **CROWBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL** held at the Council Offices, Pine Grove, Crowborough on Tuesday 10th September 2024 at 7.30pm

Present	Councillors	Alison Arthur	(also WDC)
		Peter Bucklitsch*	
		Jane Clark	(also WDC)
		Suzanne Dixon	
		Martyn Everitt	(also WDC)
		Martyn Garrett	
		Paul Goddard	
		Christopher Grose	
		David Hedges	
		Richard Jury	
		Kay Moss	
		Beverly Pashley*	
		Simon Ryder*	
		Matthew Street	Mayor
Neil Waller			
Natalie Whittle	Deputy Mayor		
Also present		Caroline Miles	Town Clerk
		Melanie Street	Deputy Town Clerk
		Cllr Philip Lunn	East Sussex County Council
		One member of the public in the chamber	
		One member of the public online	

*Denotes non attendance

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of the public spoke regarding his application which was being discussed under item 18. He outlined his vision for the space. In response to questions from councillors, he explained that he is aware of temperature fluctuations in the atrium but does not consider them a problem, that he will be using his own electric generator and understands that there is no hard power connection, that he will only be providing a take-away service but will use biodegradable cups or encourage usage of reusable travel mugs and that he would prefer a 12-month licence as it will give him time to establish his business.

A member of the public spoke to ask council two questions. Firstly, he asked why the proposed Business Plan included an income for Wolfe Cottage when the council was currently selling the property. The Mayor explained that the figure listed in the Business Plan showed expenditure and not income for the cottage. Secondly, the member of the public asked why the report on item 17 stated in different places that Cllr Waller was both a signatory and also not able to be a signatory. Cllr Waller explained that he is currently

Chairperson of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and in that capacity has to sign the Bank Reconciliation, so in order to keep a separation of function he does not currently function as a bank signatory. However, he may not be the Chairperson in future years and is therefore kept on as a bank signatory so that he can sign payments when that happens.

PRAYER

The Mayor opened the meeting with a prayer.

APOLOGIES

Cllrs Peter Bucklitsch, Beverly Pashley and Simon Ryder.
ESCC Cllr Johanna Howell
WDC Cllr Gareth Owen-Williams

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25th June 2024

10630 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2024 as confirmed be ratified by the Chairperson.

The Mayor moved that item 18 be heard next as there was a member of the public present with an interest in this item.

REQUEST TO RENT SPACE IN THE ATRIUM

To note the request and agree any action

The request to rent space in the Pine Grove atrium for a takeaway refreshment business was noted. A member noted that the council has a custodian trusteeship of the Crowborough Community Centre and asked members if agreeing to this request could possibly jeopardise an income stream for the centre. The council's representative to the Community Association explained that there were no plans to reinstate a café there as it had struggled with lack of footfall and retaining kitchen staff. The council discussed the potential rent for space in the atrium and the length of licence to be offered.

10631 RESOLVED to offer the space requested in the Pine Grove atrium at an initial annual rent of £750, to grant a licence to the applicant for twelve months with a six-month break clause and that all legal costs pertaining to the request will be borne by the applicant.

The Mayor asked the applicant to consider the council's decision and liaise with the Town Clerk as to whether he wishes to proceed.

One member of the public left the meeting online at 7.55pm.

TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Standing orders were suspended.

The report from Wealden District Councillors (WDC) was noted. A member asked about the housing numbers listed in the Draft Local Plan and whether these would now need to be revisited following the election of the new government. A WDC councillor responded that the Draft Local Plan was currently out for consultation, but indications are that it may need to be revisited.

A member asked when the feedback from the consultation was due and a WDC councillor responded that officers are still currently working through the responses.

A member noted that 320 homes were planned for the edge of Tunbridge Wells on an area of land in East Sussex, and asked if these would count towards the allocation for Tunbridge Wells or Wealden. A WDC councillor responded that they were in East Sussex and would count towards the Wealden allocation.

A member noted that there are a number of homes with consent that are not actually built and don't count towards the target. A WDC councillor responded that around 900 homes were given permission to be built but were never developed and that WDC applies a 3-year build clause to permission granted in an attempt to stop this happening.

An East Sussex County Councillor (ESCC) was present to answer questions. He informed members that some issues previously raised were now being dealt with by officers.

A member shared that he had recently had to contact the Highways department at ESCC regarding poor diversion signage for the Walshes Road closure. The ESCC councillor responded that he had informed the Highways Steward of this, and it had been dealt with.

Standing orders were reinstated.

TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CTC COUNCILLORS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The report on Clued-Up info was noted. A member noted that Lorna Watson, who has been with the charity since its inception, is retiring soon. The council expressed its thanks to Lorna for all her work helping the young people of Crowborough through Clued-Up info. The council's representative to the charity discussed potential changes to the set up and members asked that the council remain informed as the Service Level Agreement paid to the charity contains certain stipulations.

One of the council's representatives to Green Transition Crowborough informed council that they had not submitted a written report but wanted council to consider a request. Council agreed to hear the verbal request. Green Transition Crowborough is holding a meeting and asked if councillors or an officer would attend. It was agreed that the member would email the invitation to the councillors who could then attend if they wished. If the Operations Manager is available on the date, he will also be invited by the Clerk.

TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

A member asked if a fairground could be permitted on the Eridge Field site. The Chairperson of the Communication and Events Committee responded to say that the committee has received the request and is currently seeking more information before bringing it back for discussion at a future meeting.

A member of the public left the chamber at 8.15pm.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the acts and proceedings of the following committee meetings

The following committee minutes were received and noted:

Allotments & Cemeteries – 14th May & 4th June 2024

Communication & Events – 11th June 2024

Environment – 11th June 2024

Personnel – 26th March & 14th May 2024

Planning & Development – 10th June, 1st July, 22nd July, & 12th August 2024

Sport & Recreation – 12th June & 23rd July 2024

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

To note the Town Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's engagements

The engagements were noted. It was noted that Cllr Roy Galley is the Chairman of East Sussex County Council and not Wealden District Council as listed.

The Mayor shared a letter from the Deputy Lieutenant of East Sussex asking councils to consider any nominations for the King's Award for Voluntary Service. The Mayor asked members to consider if they had any nominations and to bring them to the Council on a future agenda if they did. A member suggested that a plaque be installed in the chamber to display the names of existing or future recipients. It was agreed to add this to the agenda of the next Communication and Events Committee meeting.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

To note the payments made in June, July and August 2024

The payments were noted.

To note the latest report from Basepoint

The Basepoint report was noted.

To note the Income and Expenditure reports against budget and the Earmarked Reserves (EMR) position

The Income and Expenditure was noted.

The Earmarked Reserves were noted.

TO AUTHORISE THE SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

10632 RESOLVED to authorise the following Grants of Exclusive Rights of Burial:

CERTIFICATE	NAME	GRAVE SPACE
Q1201	Philip Haughton	L/2507

MEETINGS SCHEDULE 2025/26

To note and agree the meetings schedule for 2025/26

The draft schedule included the Town Meeting on 19th March 2025. The Communication and Events Committee has asked for this to be held in a new venue, which is not available on this date, so members were asked, and agreed to, consider holding the meeting on Thursday 20th March 2025 instead. An error in the dating for February 2026 was noted.

10633 RESOLVED to accept the 2025/26 meetings schedule with the amendments noted.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

To note the report and agree any further action

Members discussed the report. It was agreed that the information supplied was disappointing, both in scope and presentation. Furthermore, some of the financial information appeared incorrect. The council considered each site as listed and discussed the options suggested. It was agreed that progressing such works at St Thomas Chapel, Pilmer Cabin and Goldsmiths Toilets would not be financially prudent as it would take too long to recover the costs involved. Additionally, it was agreed that whilst Goldsmiths Changing Rooms may be a suitable site the boilers here are relatively new and it is not

environmentally sustainable to remove them at the present time. This site may be revisited in future years.

It was agreed that Pine Grove, Whitehill Centre and Wolfe Tractor Shed were all sites which could benefit from further investigation. It was noted that the report supplied by the company had not included all possible options, only focussing on Solar Photovoltaic (PV) and Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP). Some sites could potentially benefit from solar thermal and electric vehicle charging points. Additionally, should future discussions progress the PV option at Pine Grove the council will have to engage a structural engineer to inspect the current roof structure and how much additional weight it can support from PV panels.

A member suggested the council consider engaging Lewes-based company, Ovesco to provide more detailed options for the three sites identified.

- 10634 RESOLVED** to liaise with Ovesco to investigate and provide a feasibility report on a full range of renewable energy solutions for Pine Grove, Whitehill Centre and Wolfe Tractor Shed with monies to be taken from the General Reserve.

BUSINESS PLAN

To note the Business Plan and agree further action.

The Mayor explained the purpose and process of the Business Plan. As this is the first year of the Plan the process will be re-visited in February with each committee having the opportunity to add or remove projects as agreed. The Business Plan Working Group will meet again to review the Plan in mid-April.

Some typographical errors were noted and will be amended. A member asked if the Clubs and Activities Roadshow mentioned in the Plan could be combined with the Town Meeting. It was agreed to add this to the next agenda of the Communication and Events Committee.

- 10635 RESOLVED** to accept the Business Plan as submitted with the amendments noted.

The Mayor thanked all the officers, Chairpersons and committee members for their hard work on the Business Plan, especially ensuring that the September deadline was met.

PINE GROVE

To note the officer's report

The report was noted.

COUNCILLOR REQUEST

To approve Cllr Goddard's application to sit on the Personnel Committee

10636 RESOLVED to accept Cllr Goddard's application to sit on the Personnel committee.

COUNCILLOR AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENTS

To note the report on councillor authorised payments.

The report was noted. The Mayor explained the process and thanked those who had recently completed their forms; four more councillors have now been added as signatories. As previously discussed by Council, those members who can be signatories agreed to approve at least two payments every six months.

STAIR LIFT REPLACEMENT

To note the request and agree any action

Members considered the current provision and request to replace the current lift. It was agreed that the Council Offices and chamber should be as accessible as possible. It was agreed that a platform lift was the preferred option. As this would involve building work to remove part of the stairs prior to installation, further information and costings should be sought. Officers will obtain quotes for the next meeting.

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

A member raised concerns regarding poor deliveries by Royal Mail in Crowborough. This particularly affects those who rely on the postal service rather than digital communications. It was agreed to add this to the next agenda.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.