

Minutes of a meeting of the **CROWBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL** held at the Council Offices, Pine Grove, Crowborough on Tuesday 19th November 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	
		Simon Ryder*	
		Matthew Street	Mayor
		Neil Waller	
Natalie Whittle	Deputy Mayor		
Also present		Caroline Miles	Town Clerk
		Melanie Street	Deputy Town Clerk
		Karen Whiley	Responsible Finance Officer
		Charlotte Penny	Meetings Administrator
		5 members of the public in the chamber	
		1 member of the public online	

*Denotes non attendance

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of the public spoke in relation to item 18. He stated that he represented a group of parents and carers who were opposed to the closure of learning disability day services at Hookstead. He stated that thirty-five of the forty-two service users are based in Crowborough or Uckfield and expressed concern that East Sussex County Council (ESCC) had not been able to provide him with a breakdown of the proposed savings or explanation of where the current users will go. Furthermore, he stated that The Barn Centre service which had been listed in the document as an alternative provision had not been approached by ESCC regarding additional capacity. Parents and carers consider the other alternative, St Nicholas in Lewes, to be too far away, that it has no room for further growth and requires building works to be fit for purpose. Additionally, the member of the public stated that if only two users were to require residential care as a result of the closure, then the proposed savings would be nullified. He requested that the council oppose the closure of these services.

A member of the public spoke in relation to item 19. He stated that he had noticed some councillors had been unable to attend in-person meetings due to circumstances and that remote meetings had worked well during the covid pandemic. He asked the council to respond to the consultation in support of allowing remote or hybrid meetings.

PRAYER

The Mayor opened the meeting with a prayer.

APOLOGIES

Cllr Paul Goddard
ESCC Cllr Johanna Howell
ESCC Cllr Philip Lunn

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Neil Waller declare a personal interest in item 13 as he had previously worked with one of the consultants from Ovesco and had suggested that the council consider using Ovesco for the study review.

MINUTES

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 10th September 2024

10694 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2024 as confirmed be ratified by the Chairperson.

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

ESCC CONSULATION ON SERVICE CHANGES

To note the consultation and agree further action

The council noted that Hookstead is well used by the local community, with over 90% of users living in Crowborough or Uckfield. Closure of the day services would mean an absence of facilities in the north of the district, with many users having to use St Nicholas in Lewes. Members were sceptical that The Barn Centre would be able to accommodate more users and noted that it had recently obtained planning permission for a residential dwelling on the site. It considers Hookstead well-equipped and fit for purpose, unlike St Nicholas which requires additional building works and, due to size and layout, is less suitable for those

requiring a quieter environment. Furthermore, the council does not believe ESCC has presented a conclusive financial case nor considered the environmental impact of all the current users having to travel by private transport to the south of the country or into Kent to use day services.

- 10695 RESOLVED** that Crowborough Town Council strongly opposes the closure of adult day services at Hookstead.
- 10696 RESOLVED** to delegate authority to Cllr Natalie Whittle and Cllr Martyn Everitt to respond to the ESCC consultation on Adult Social Care and Health Savings Proposals on behalf of the council by 28th November 2024.

Councillors were reminded that they can also respond to the consultation individually.

Two members of the public left the chamber at 8pm.

Standing orders were suspended.

Ovesco gave a short presentation. The consultant spoke about his review of the Feasibility Study and noted in summary that the Pine Grove Enterprise Centre could benefit from the installation of PV panels. Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) and batteries could extend the savings further. Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points could be considered if there is sufficient budget to allow. In regard to the Whitehill Centre, which does not use much energy, financial savings and impact on the carbon footprint are less obvious. The Wolfe Yard Tractor Shed could benefit from the installation of PV panels. Additional EV points could be added in the future should the council expand its fleet of electric vehicles.

One member of the public left the chamber at 8.24pm.

Members asked the consultant questions relating to each of the sites.

Standing orders were reinstated.

It was agreed not to progress any work at the Whitehill Centre as the site is due to have the current floor replaced and this could provide an opportunity to consider insulation, underfloor heating and other potential options. Members agreed that savings at Pine Grove and the Wolfe Tractor Shed made these sites viable for work. It was noted that the council recharges over 80% of energy costs at Pine Grove and members discussed how to potentially recharge should work go ahead.

Cllr Neil Waller apologised to council as he had received an urgent business call. He left the meeting at 8.49pm.

- 10697 RESOLVED** in principle to the installation of PV panels, Air Source Heat Pump and battery at Pine Grove Enterprise Centre, and the installation of PV panels and battery at Wolfe Yard Tractor Shed.

10698 RESOLVED to delegate authority to the Town Clerk to arrange for a tender pack to be produced for the installation of PV panels, Air Source Heat Pump and battery at Pine Grove Enterprise Centre, and the installation of PV panels and battery at Wolfe Yard Tractor Shed, with costs to be taken from 4250/113.

The Chairperson thanked Ovesco for the presentation. Two members of the public left the chamber at 8.56pm.

TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

A member asked for district and county councillors to kindly be reminded to provide written reports in advance so that they can be circulated with the agenda, and for a more localised county council report with specific reference to Highways as this is a key concern for the town. One of the council's representatives to Strengthening Local Relationships informed council that a number of Highways concerns had recently been raised at that meeting. Any interim Highways concerns should be feedback to the Deputy Clerk who will be the council's liaison with ESCC Highways.

TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CTC COUNCILLORS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Noted.

TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

A member asked when the Clued-Up biannual report was due. The Town Clerk will liaise with Clued-Up in advance of the next meeting.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

Noted.

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

The Mayor noted that one of his engagements had been omitted from the list: he had also attended Apple Day at the Community Orchard on 26th October.

The Mayor thanked all those who had collected for the Mayor's charities at the fireworks event and reported that over £4,000 had been raised.

ClIr Kay Moss declared a personal interest as she is a Trustee of the Friends of Crowborough Hospital which is one of the Mayor's charities this year.

The Mayor informed council that he will be attending an interview at Ashdown Radio on 16th December. He also asked for volunteers to help collect money for his charities at a local supermarket in the weeks before Christmas.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The payments made in September and October 2024 were noted.

The latest report from Basepoint was noted.

The Income and Expenditure reports against budget and the Earmarked Reserves were noted.

10699 RESOLVED to approve the request from the Sport and Recreation Committee for £150,000 of CiL funds to be made available to the committee for the replacement of play equipment at Adam Field and Silver Jubilee Pleasure Ground.

The External Auditors report was noted, and members thanked the RFO for her work which contributed to a very positive report.

10700 RESOLVED to approve the Financial Regulations as presented.

10701 RESOLVED to approve the recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee to transfer £150,000 from General Reserves into the Pine Grove Earmarked Reserve (314/901/9010) as recommended in the Internal Auditors report.

TO AUTHORISE THE SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

Noted.

10702 RESOLVED to authorise the following Grants of Exclusive Rights of Burial:

CERTIFICATE	NAME	GRAVE SPACE
Q1202	Elizabeth Parks	GRH182
Q1203	Sylvia Martin & Robert Martin	O/3191A
Q1204	Sylvia Martin & Robert Martin	O/3204A
Q1205	Jennifer Darby & Stephen Darby	GRW4
Q1206	Susan Baker, Steven Baker & Julia Deer	GRW5

COUNCILLOR VACANCY

To appoint a representative to Clued Up for 2024/5

- 10703 RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Natalie Whittle as the council's representative to Clued-Up Info for the remainder of the current year.

To appoint a representative for the Jarvis Brook Community Association for 2024/25

It was agreed to wait until after the current co-option vacancy is filled as the vacancy is for Jarvis Brook ward and the new councillor may wish to be a representative to the Jarvis Brook Community Association.

To consider a date to co-opt for the Jarvis Brook Ward

It was agreed to hold co-option at the Full Council meeting on 11th March 2025.

Cllr Jane Clark left the meeting at 9.14pm.

TOILET BLOCK REFURBISHMENT

To note the report on the toilet block refurbishment and agree further action

The report was noted.

- 10704 RESOLVED** to accept the quote for the production of a tender pack and the administration of the contract to refurbish the toilet block at Pine Grove Council Offices, with funds to be taken from 4250/113.

STAIRLIFT REPLACEMENT

To note the report and agree further action

Members discussed the report. It was noted that the larger, glass platform lift option would cost in the region of £40,000 and would necessitate the narrowing of the current staircase which would in turn reduce the capacity permitted in the chamber as this is a fire escape route. Council noted that replacement of the current lift with a newer version should accommodate most electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters. This would cost in the region of £17,500.

- 10705 RESOLVED** to accept Option 1 and to upgrade the current stairlift to one which accommodates electric wheelchairs.

PINE GROVE

To note the request from Basepoint and agree further action

The report was noted.

- 10706 RESOLVED** to approve the request from Basepoint to install a door at the end of the corridor with all works to be arranged and paid for by Basepoint.

POLICY REVIEW

- 10707 RESOLVED** to accept the Complaints Procedure as presented.

- 10708 RESOLVED** to accept the Sponsorship Policy as presented.

ESCC CONSULTATION ON SERVICE CHANGES

To note the consultation and agree further action

Council had discussed the consultation as pertaining to Hookstead earlier in the meeting. This item related to eleven consultations in total. It was agreed that councillors would respond to the remaining ones individually if they so wished.

ClIr Peter Bucklitsch left the meeting at 9.28pm.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS

To note the consultation and agree further action

Members discussed the consultation and what circumstances could necessitate remote attendance. Proxy voting was discussed. There were concerns that this could be open to abuse, and it was agreed that this could lead to pre-determination.

One member of the public left the meeting online at 9.33pm.

- 10709 RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Town Clerk to respond to the Government Consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings stating the council's support of remote attendance only in exceptional circumstances and the council's opposition to proxy voting.

Councillors were reminded that they can also respond to the consultation individually.

ESCC CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE A BOOKING SYSTEM TO USE RECYCLING CENTRES

To note the consultation and agree further action

The Council discussed the report and agreed that Crowborough does not suffer from excessive or frequent queues.

10710 RESOLVED that the Town Clerk write a letter to East Sussex County Council stating that the council is unanimously opposed to the introduction of a booking system for the recycling centre and does not consider it at all necessary for Crowborough.

Councillors were reminded that they can also respond to the consultation individually.

I CARE FOR CROWBOROUGH

To note the I Care for Crowborough report

A verbal update was given. The Youth Ambassador Board will be arranging the I Care for Crowborough event in liaison with councillors appointed from the Communication and Events Committee. This will take place in spring 2025 and councillors will be encouraged to take part. Further details will be available in due course.

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

The Town Clerk informed members that the request for a coffee bar in the atrium would not be progressing as a risk assessment had deemed the provision high risk, especially as regards hygiene.

A member expressed difficulties regarding the new electronic tablets all councillors had been provided with. The tablets had been provided at the request of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and it was agreed to place this on the agenda for the next meeting of the committee.

The meeting closed at 9.44pm.