

Minutes of a meeting of CREWKERNE TOWN COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Square commencing at 18.45 on Monday 25 November 2024.

**PRESENT**

Cllrs. A. Samuel (Mayor), S. Ashton, M. Best, N. Draycott, K. Head, D. Livesley, J. Morris (from item 093/2425 onwards), J. Nathan, C. Rawe, A. Stuart and S. Woodland.

In attendance: Town Clerk K. Sheehan, Deputy Clerk G. Hughes, and five members of the public.

090 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

24/25

None.

091 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

24/25

Cllr. Ashton declared that he had recently been co-opted to Merriott Parish Council and that this change had not yet been reflected in his Register of Interests.

092 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2024**

24/25

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 were AGREED as a true and accurate record.

093 **PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

24/25

Cllr. Morris arrived during the public open forum.

Three members of the public spoke on the annual Boxing Day meet of the Seavington Hunt in Crewkerne, noting that:

- They understood that the Town Council did not have any part in the arrangements for the hunt passing through the town;
- They wished to raise awareness of their reasons for opposing fox hunting as members of the Action Against Foxhunting;
- They had numerous concerns about the presence of the Seavington Hunt in Crewkerne on Boxing Day, which they wished to share with Councillors.

Two members of the public raised the following points in relation to a proposal to occasionally light the Lucombe Oak:

- Artificial lighting could potentially harm wildlife and possibly the tree;
- Lighting of the trees at Bincombe Beeches would be preferable as it would help promote the nature trail and draw visitors to the nature reserve;
- Why councillors had selected this site for lighting.

Cllr. Samuel thanked everyone for their contributions.

094 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:**

24/25

a. Somerset Councillors

Cllrs. Ashton and Best reported that:

- A number of consultations were now live, including a boundary review, a planning validations checklist review and the Local Plan consultation.
- Both members expressed concern about the redundancy plans, particularly where Highways officers were affected.
- There was no further update on the Recycling Centre proposals.

Cllr. Ashton commented that he had not found a recent meeting held by Somerset Council for the City, Town and Parish Councils particularly useful.

b. Local Community Network (LCN) representative

Cllr. Head reported that the next LCN meeting had been deferred until January.

c. Crewkerne Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT)

A written report would be circulated but had not yet been received.

095  
24/25

**CLERK'S PROGRESS REPORT**

The Town Clerk reported that:

- Correspondence had been received from anti-foxhunting campaigners regarding the Boxing Day meet of the Seavington Hunt;
- Planned works in south Crewkerne in early 2025 had been postponed by Wessex Water until later in the year;
- Anti-social behaviour at the public toilets had escalated recently, with groups congregating in and around the block. It was suggested that the opening times be changed to close earlier, following consultation with the police. The Town Clerk would action this following Lighting Up at the end of the week.
- No applications for the vacant position on the Town Council had been received, so the opportunity to apply would remain open.

096  
24/25

**FINANCE**

a. To approve the accounts for payment for November 2024 as listed

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr. Best had verified the accounts for payment in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. Accounts for payment for 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024 in the sum of £71,942.66 were APPROVED.

b. To report the bank reconciliation for October 2024 has been completed

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr. Best had verified the bank reconciliation for October 2024. It was noted that cash in hand as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 was £701,501.05.

c. To note that the monthly accounts for the War Memorial Commemoration Trust have been checked

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr. Best had verified the Trust accounts and that cash in hand as of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 was £6,296.05.

097 **PLANNING**

24/25 To consider applications requiring comment before the next Planning and Highways Committee meeting:  
a. 24/02625/TCA East Grove, Poples Well, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7ES

Councillors noted these planned works to two trees due to proximity to power lines.

098 **LUCOMBE OAK**

24/25 To note receipt of a petition and consider a response

Councillors noted receipt of a petition consisting of 385 signatures opposing the proposal to light the Lucombe Oak for special occasions/events.

In considering how to respond to the petition, the following points were raised:

- Some Councillors felt that there had been some misunderstanding of the plans to light the tree. The planned installation would have lighting controls, allowing intensity to be adjusted. There had been some suggestion that the proposal had been to light the tree every day, however, this was clarified to be just occasional evenings to mark events, e.g. Remembrance. The lights would be turned off at the end of such evenings.
- Some Councillors felt that it would be good to celebrate one of the town's most significant trees, lighting it sensitively and appropriately would highlight this asset to many people who are currently unaware of it. Highlighting shape, form and structure could be educational.
- The history of the development of the hybrid Lucombe Oaks was explained and a suggestion was made to hold a Lucombe Oak celebration day to inform people about the tree's history.
- Some Councillors commented that they felt that the wording of the petition had not accurately reflected the proposal.
- Some Councillors highlighted that they were not in support of the proposal, noting that funds could be used elsewhere when budgets are tight.
- In response to a suggestion from a member of the public that the bat survey had been conducted too late in the year and that bats would be hibernating, Councillors reported bat activity late in the year due to the warm autumn, which had also been confirmed in the bat survey.
- Some Councillors felt that the Lucombe Oak was very much an urban tree as it was already surrounded by three large externally lit buildings, a row of streetlights and a car park.
- Councillors noted that this was not a new idea, but had been on the Council's Action Plan for many years and had originally been suggested by members of the public.
- One councillor commented that such lighting could provide a sense of well-being and pride in the community.

In response to a query from the Town Clerk about how Councillors would like to respond to the petition, it was agreed that she should write and acknowledge receipt of the petition and thank those involved for taking the time to make their views known. She was asked to outline the views expressed by Councillors about the proposal, noting that a planning application would be submitted in due course, during which there would be opportunity for public consultation.

099 **AWE & WONDER (A&W):**

24/25 To consider a request for support for an external funding application to extend A&W as a winter hub until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

Councillors AGREED a request from Victoria Delchand-Bee for formal support in her application to Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) for additional funding to continue A&W as a winter hub for local families.

100 **CONSULTATIONS:**

24/25 To consider a response to the following consultations:

- a) Local Government Boundary Commission: proposals for an electoral review in Somerset.  
Councillors made the following observations for submission:
  - The Town Council would not support single-member wards for the unitary council.
  - The Town Council opposes any changes to wards which divides the town of Crewkerne in two.
  - A hybrid approach to ward sizes may be required to ensure that each ward serves a relatively equal number of residents.
- b) Somerset Council's Validation Checklist consultation:  
Cllr. Ashton to circulate his suggestions for review by all Councillors.
- c) Government consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting at council meetings:
  - The potential difficulties with chairing meetings with hybrid attendees were noted.
  - Crewkerne Town Council would support remote attendance at meetings but opposed the introduction of proxy voting.
  - Concerns were raised about confidential sessions when held remotely as it would not be possible for attendees to have certainty over anyone else in the room.

It was AGREED to delegate to the Town Clerk to formulate responses to the consultations as outlined above, which would be circulated to all for final review before submission.

101 **HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

24/25 a) To consider a request from North Perrott Parish Council (NPPC) for traffic survey funding

Some discussion took place around a request received from NPPC for funding to assist with a traffic survey for the A3066 and A356. Cllrs. Best and Ashton confirmed that Somerset Council Highways officers had already declined this request. It was noted that SC officers had felt that there was no quantifiable benefit to this, noting that diversionary routes are necessarily to roads of the same classification, so these roads will be natural diversion routes during major road works.

b) To consider a request from Adam Dance MP for 20mph limits in the town centre

Councillors noted that speeding was a genuine issue in the town centre and asked the Town Clerk to obtain up to date information on Somerset Council's 20mph pilot scheme for consideration in the budget for either 2025/26 or a later year. The Clerk was also asked to contact South Petherton Parish Council for details about an informal 20mph campaign in the village.

The Town Clerk was asked to formulate responses to both NPPC and Adam Dance MP.

102 **GEORGE REYNOLDS CENTRE MANAGEMENT:**

24/25 To receive a verbal update from Cllr. Best

Cllr. Best reported that he was continuing work on the draft business plan which was hoped to be ready by January.

103 **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES AND APPROVE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS THEREIN:**

24/25

- a. Planning and Highways Committee 16 September 2024.
- b. Reports from Town Council representatives to outside bodies.

All minutes above were duly noted and any recommendations contained therein AGREED.

104 **MATTERS OF REPORT**

24/25

Councillors raised the following points:

- Cllr. Head requested that a follow up letter be sent regarding the heras fencing on the A30.
- Cllr. Best responded to a question from Cllr. Draycott regarding the delivery of the A30-A356 link road, expected by January 2027.
- Cllr. Stuart commented that it was disappointing that no one had yet put themselves forward for the vacant position on the Town Council.
- Cllr. Woodland commented that vehicles parked along Station Road were obstructing the pavement, particularly for wheelchair users and pushchairs. It was noted that Misterton Parish Council were pursuing parking restrictions along the majority of this stretch.
- Cllr. Ashton reported that refurbishment of the Waitrose building and car park was likely to be confirmed in the near future.
- Cllr. Nathan noted that despite reporting a number of faulty streetlights to Somerset Council, no remedial action had been taken. Cllr. Best offered to chase this up.
- Cllr. Samuel reported that the new bench in Falkland Square had been positively received and expressed thanks on behalf of the Royal British Legion for the support for the recent Remembrance events in the town.

105 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

24/25

Monday 16 December 2024, 18.45, Council Chamber, Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 20.26.

Signed: .....

Dated: .....

TC25November2024