

Minutes of a meeting of CREWKERNE TOWN COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Square commencing at 18.45 on Monday 24 March 2025.

PRESENT

Cllrs. A. Samuel (Mayor), S. Ashton, N. Draycott, K. Head, J. Morris, J. Nathan, and A. Stuart.

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

154 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

24/25

Apologies were received from Cllrs. M. Best, D. Livesley and S. Woodland (all personal), and Cllr. C. Rawe (unwell).

155 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

24/25

None.

156 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2025

24/25

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2025 were AGREED as a true and accurate record.

157 PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

24/25

A member of the public spoke on behalf of Action Against Foxhunting (AAF), noting that:

- AAF continued to ask for an independent survey to be commissioned by Crewkerne Town Council to determine the level of support for the hunt in the town.
- The FOI made by AAF to Somerset Council had been denied, it was suggested that the Town Council might pursue this request.
- AAF could potentially fundraise towards the cost of this survey.

Cllr. Samuel thanked the member of the public for their contribution. She confirmed that:

- If a Freedom of Information request has been denied to AAF by Somerset Council, this would be the same response they would give if Crewkerne Town Council submitted the same FOI request. The criteria for allowing or denying FOI requests are the same, regardless of who requests the information.
- There is no money in the Town Council's budget to commission an independent survey. Every year, budgets are set well in advance for each financial year and there is no provision either in the current budget or next year's to fund this work. Additionally, there was never a suggestion that Crewkerne Town Council would be responsible for doing this, only that an independent survey would be the only way to determine the true level of support for the Hunt.

Cllr. Samuel concluded by saying that Councillors would now draw a line under discussions about the Hunt in Crewkerne until such time that results of an independent survey were received. Some discussion took place about what would constitute a truly independent survey.

Two members of the public then left the meeting.

158 TO CO-OPT TO THE VACANT POSITION ON CREWKERNE TOWN COUNCIL

24/25

The three applicants were invited to introduce themselves. A statement was read on behalf of the fourth candidate, who was unable to be present.

Following a vote, it was AGREED that Paul Maxwell be co-opted to the vacant position on Crewkerne Town Council.

The declaration of acceptance of office was signed by Cllr. Maxwell and the Town Clerk.

159 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:**

24/25 a. Somerset Councillors

Cllr. Ashton reported that:

- Somerset Council had set their council tax following a dispensation from government to allow an additional 2.5% to be levied.
- A consultation on Public Space Protection Orders had been published.
- Changes to car parking charges had been agreed as part of the overall budget.
- A review of the Local Community Networks would be taking place.

b. Local Community Network (LCN) representative

Cllr. Head reported that the Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN was due to meet later in the week.

c. Crewkerne Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT)

A written report had been circulated. No questions were asked.

160 **CLERK'S PROGRESS REPORT**

24/25

The Town Clerk reported that:

- The installation works for the banking hub were due to commence during the week. There would be some disruption but the Local Information Centre would remain open.
- Anti-Social Behaviour issues continued to cause problems for the Youth Service. An urgent meeting with the provider had taken place, and the situation remained under active review.
- Councillors were asked to contact the Town Clerk as soon as possible to confirm their attendance at the Annual Town Meeting/Community Engagement event on 14th April.

161 **FINANCE**

24/25

a. To approve the accounts for payment for March 2025 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 24th March 2025 in the sum of £79,910.09 were APPROVED.

b. To report the bank reconciliation for February 2025 has been completed

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr. Best had verified the bank reconciliation for February 2025. It was noted that cash in hand as of 28 February 2025 was £493,061.64.

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 28 February 2025 was £7,440.24.

d. To consider a grant application from Crewkerne Youth Council

An application for funding to support a twinning exercise with Weston-Super-Mare Youth Council was considered. It was noted that the Youth Councillors were hoping to visit this more established and experienced Youth Council and were applying for £240 to assist with the costs of the community minibus and extra staff time. It was AGREED to award this grant funding, with funds to be released from the Youth Council earmarked reserve.

e. To consider a grant application from Crewkerne Timebank

An application for a grant of £150 to fund a family craft activity designed to attract members for the Timebank was AGREED.

f. To note that the annual review of internal controls has been carried out and report circulated

The report from the annual review of internal controls (financial risk) was noted.

g. To adopt an updated Employer Pensions Discretions Policy

The updated policy was AGREED.

162 **PLANNING**

24/25

To consider applications requiring comments before the next meeting of the Planning and Highways Committee meeting:

a) **25/00518/TCA Orchard House Orchard Lane Crewkerne Somerset TA18 7AF**

Notification of intent to carry out Tree Surgery Works to No. 3 Trees within a Conservation Area. T1: Norway maple to remove all major dead wood and raise the crown over the path by 1.5m. T2: Bay to reduce the overall crown by up to 3m to previous points. T3: Cherry to reduce the overall crown by up to 2m to previous points.

b) **25/00580/TCA Old Bincombe Popleswell Crewkerne Somerset TA18 7ES**

Notification of intent to Fell No. 1 Tree (Wild Cherry T1) and carry out Tree Surgery Works to No. 1 Tree (Wild Cherry T2 – Shorten the 2 stems over parking area to Southwest side by 3.5m) within a Conservation Area.

c) **25/00615/TCA 27 Hermitage Street Crewkerne Somerset TA18 8ET**

Notification of intent to remove two Leyland Cypress trees included within Conservation Area.

d) **APP/R3325/F/24/3342095 2A and 2B Abbey Mews Abbey Street Crewkerne TA18 7HY**

The contravention of listed building control as alleged in the notice is without planning permission or listed building consent the removal and replacement of roof tiles, rainwater goods, external windows, external doors and internal doors.

The appeal is made on the grounds set out in section 39(1) (d), (e), (g) and (i) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended 1991.

Ground d	Appeal Fails
Ground e	Appeal Succeeds in part
Ground i	Appeal Fails
Ground g	Appeal Fails

Items a, b, c and d above were duly noted. The Deputy Clerk was asked to chase up previous queries submitted to Somerset Council around why parish and town councils are only notified of tree applications. Councillors also commented that they would like to see a suitable replacement tree planted on site wherever a tree is removed.

163 LICENSING APPLICATION

24/25 To consider an application to sell alcohol on and off the premises at Cosy Café, Middle Path

Councillors considered the application, and agreed to submit comments to Somerset Council highlighting the risk of creating public nuisance by allowing the sales of alcohol in a primarily residential area until 9pm, as well as concerns that this could potentially cause a nuisance to patients in the hospital located directly opposite.

164 AQUA CENTRE RENT REVIEW

24/25 To consider the deferred rent review for the Aqua Centre

The lease for the Aqua Centre states that the rent should be independently reviewed every 5 years. Actual timing for the reviews has not been in line with the wording in the lease. The last review of the rent was undertaken in January 2018 by the District Valuer. The result of this valuation was a recommendation from the DV to leave the rent unchanged (at £1,000 p.a.).

In 2020 and 2023 Council agreed, in light of the high cost of utilities, and the unchanged nature of the Aqua Centre operations to defer the review to 2025. The Aqua Centre rent is currently set at £1,000 p.a. in recognition of the community benefit it brings to the town and local area, the non-profit making nature of the Centre, and no additional subsidy is required.

Following discussion, it was AGREED that the rent review be deferred until 2027.

165 COUNCILLOR SURGERIES

24/25

Date of surgery	Councillor 1	Councillor 2
Saturday 26 th April	Cllr. Morris	Cllr. Samuel
Saturday 24 th May	Cllr. Stuart	Cllr. Morris
Saturday 28 th June	Cllr. Head	Cllr. Maxwell

The Surgery cover was agreed as above, with Cllr. Nathan offering to act as a reserve.

166 GEORGE REYNOLDS CENTRE (GRC) MANAGEMENT

24/25 To note that the presentation of the business case from Cllr. Best has been deferred until April

As Councillor Best was unable to attend the meeting, it was noted that his business case for the independent management of the GRC would be deferred until April.

Councillors noted that they had awaiting this report for months, and expressed that it is now imperative that it is presented no later than the end of April.

167 HAPPY VALLEY YOUTH OUTREACH ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2025

24/25

The Deputy Clerk updated Councillors on the following arrangements:

- The Youth Service team would provide (weather depending) two visits per week at an average of three hours per week.

- Outreach works would commence after Easter, with an update report to Council scheduled for the end of June, at which point it would be decided whether to continue in September (until half term).

168 **LUCOMBE OAK**

24/25 To consider a response to Somerset Council regarding a possible Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on the Lucombe Oak

Councillors noted that the Lucombe Oak is regarded as one of Crewkerne's most significant trees. Owned and cared for by Crewkerne Town Council, the tree currently does not benefit from a TPO, nor is it situated in the town's Conservation Area.

Somerset Council had made the following observations and suggested a possible TPO:

- There are no concerns with this tree's conservation or management.
- As CTC already has an independent arboriculturist check the tree regularly and management decisions are made based on their findings, this TPO shouldn't impact the way the Town Council manages the tree, but it may offer reassurance to the town's residents.
- A TPO wouldn't prevent works from being carried out to the tree (or even felling the tree if necessary), it would only mean that such works would need to be sufficiently justified, typically by the findings of a qualified arboriculturist.
- A TPO would not necessarily prevent CTC from proceeding with plans (subject to separate planning consent) to occasionally light the Lucombe Oak.

Councillors AGREED to support the suggestion of pursuing a TPO for the Lucombe Oak.

169 **MEMORIAL BENCH**

24/25 To confirm the donation of a memorial bench and determine location

The donation of a memorial bench from the Royal British Legion (RBL) was accepted to replace one of the benches outside the front of Town Hall. The spare bench would be relocated. Thanks were extended to the RBL for this generous donation.

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

24/25

- a. Planning and Planning and Highways Committee 10 February 2025.
- b. Amenities Committee 13 January 2025.
- c. Joint Burial Committee 3 December 2025.
- d. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 28 January 2025.
- e. Reports from Town Council representatives to outside bodies.

All minutes above were duly noted and any recommendations contained therein AGREED. No reports from representatives to Outside Bodies were received.

171 **MATTERS OF REPORT**

24/25

Councillors raised the following points:

- A number of streetlights remained out of order, with particular concern over the one at the Church steps. As an additional light in the churchyard had been broken, the paths were now very dark in the evenings.
- Cllr. Draycott noted that there was an increasing amount of broken glass in the town's public spaces, with Cllrs. Morris and Nathan echoing this concern about the pavements.
- Cllr. Samuel reported that a cannister of paint had been left on the path to St. Bartholomew's School, causing a mess when picked up by a school child.
- Cllr. Samuel also reported that she had represented the Town Council at the High Sheriff's Legal Service over the weekend and that the High Sheriff had presented Cllr. Best with an award to commend his long service to the county of Somerset. Councillors offered their congratulations to Cllr. Best.

172
24/25

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 28 April 2025, 18.45, Council Chamber, Town Hall.

DRAFT

The meeting closed at 20.03.

Signed:

Dated:

TC24March2025

DRAFT