

# Crediton Town Council Annual Report 2019-20

## Chairman's Report

Frank Letch MBE Town Mayor and Chairman of Crediton Town Council

The council year began in May with the election of just 11 councillors. This necessitated co-opting a 12th councillor to bring us up to our full complement. Sadly, we have recently lost two councillors and so we are in the process of co-option once again.

During the year we have moved part of our operation to the Old Landscore School, which we see as the centre of our town council activities and also as a community meeting place. We have several local community groups who already use the building and there are more in the pipeline, which is a great benefit for our community.

We have held the usual series of events such as Christmas in Crediton, It's Your Neighbourhood competition and the council's garden competition, which was judged as usual by our resident expert Mr Bert Jewell.

The single most important thing I have to report is that we are going to lose our wonderful town clerk, as Clare Dalley has decided that after seven years she needs a change of career. We wish her well and know that her future employer will be very lucky. We have appointed a new clerk, Mrs Rachel Avery, who will join us on 1st June and we look forward as a group to working with her and I know that she is keen to get to know our wonderful community.

## Committee Reports 2018-2019

The following reports give an overview of the activities of each Crediton Town Council Committee & Sub-Committee for the past year. Each report has been written by the Committee Chair.

### Council Affairs Committee

Cllr Joyce Harris

The Council Affairs Committee meets every other month. It consists of eight Town Councillors and is responsible for determining the resource requirements of the Council and making recommendations to Council, this includes land and property, employees and contracts. In addition to this, the Committee oversees the training requirement of Councillors and staff, the policies and procedures of the Council, its publicity and public relations, any legal proceedings, electoral matters, insurance arrangements and civic events. Finally, it also scrutinises, when required, Council activities and decisions.

This year we have welcomed back Assistant Clerk, Emma Anderson, from her maternity leave. We have at last acquired the Newcombes Meadow toilets from MDCC and we are in the process of turning the disabled toilet at the front of the building into a unisex toilet. The

Gents and Ladies toilet at the back will only be opened if there is a function in Newcombes Meadow. This should help to cut down on vandalism of the toilets and enable easier maintenance.

We are also looking at the possibility of acquiring the Old Landscore School building from Devon County Council (DCC) as a new site for the Town Council offices.

It was also with regret that we received the resignation of the Town Clerk, Mrs Clare Dalley. We have now recruited a new Clerk, Mrs Rachel Avery, who will be joining us in June. We wish Clare all the best in her new career.

Committee members: Joyce, Liz, Frank, Hannah & John R

### **Town Strategy**

Cllr Liz Brookes-Hocking

This committee deals with all issues related to the town. It has an emphasis on planning matters, including comments on applications, and on forward planning, including district council plans that will directly affect the town. The committee also aims to predict where the focus of the council's efforts should be up to five years ahead.

The committee has set up sub-groups and committees to help it achieve its work. The Old Landscore School Committee is looking at the feasibility of the council taking on the premises from Devon County Council, following the loss to the community of the old Council Offices in Market Street. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Climate Change and Sustainability Sub-committee both report to the Town Strategy Committee.

The committee has progressed the Traffic and Urban Realm Feasibility Study. This work has examined traffic and town centre issues that could be alleviated by traffic management measures as and when funds become available. As the town continues to develop, finance for infrastructure becomes available and the committee has found that it is essential to have a plan ready in order to make best use of funds. If the plan has the support of the county and district councils, and of the Crediton community, then even better. That is the position we have achieved so far.

The committee also works with town groups and is supporting community initiatives such as The Crediton Heart Project and the development of youth work through the Methodist Church. It has developed an Emergency Plan, many aspects of which have enabled the town council to respond to community need in the current pandemic.

Committee members: Liz, Joyce, John D, Frank & John R

### **Assets and Amenities**

Cllr Joyce Harris

The Assets & Amenities Committee meetings every other month. It consists of eight Town Councillors and is responsible for overseeing all Council owned and leased open spaces (parks, gardens and play areas). All property owned and maintained by the Town Council is

regularly inspected by Council staff with work carried out when necessary, this also includes essential tree works. Following a recent inspection, we have now started a long term tree management project within Peoples Park to ensure the safety of the public as well as allowing the park and its wildlife to thrive.

The Council has over 100 allotments spread over three sites. The Town Clerk, along with the Chair of the Boniface Allotments Association regularly inspect the allotments providing updates at each Committee meeting.

The Committee is also responsible for coordinating the provision of floral displays within the Town and overseeing and promoting the Floral Crediton Competition. This year the Committee approved the purchase of two additional flower towers to be located outside Hillbrow Care Home, adding some extra colour to the entrance of the town.

You may also spot a new noticeboard located on the side of Nikki Blanchford Hairdressing. The Committee arranged for the old wooden noticeboard to be replaced to provide the community with a (weatherproof) space to advertise its services and events.

We are fortunate to have community volunteers and groups in the Town who work tirelessly to help keep the Town looking its best by litter picking, weed killing and looking after the flower beds, planters and wildlife areas. They really are our local heroes.

#### Old Landscore School

Cllr Joyce Harris

The Old Landscore School Sub-Committee meets every other month. It consists of six Town Councillors and is responsible for overseeing the management of the Old Landscore School building and to oversee the feasibility study to establish whether the Council wish to secure the building as a community asset and/or Council Office.

It will consider and review plans for the development of the building. Its aim is to identify opportunities to promote the building and its usage and to enable the provision of entertainment in the building in order to bring the community together.

Committee members: Joyce, John, Frank & Paul

#### Grants

Cllr Frank Letch

At the committee's meeting, held in November, it was resolved to award grants to 27 organisations totalling £24,776. The numerous organisations provide a varied spectrum of help to the community. What they all have in common is that their work benefits the people of Crediton.

As the current situation may affect many organisations receiving a grant, I foresee that the council may well be called upon to help groups whose other funding streams are closed because of lockdown! These are difficult times!

To see who received a grant and to access a copy of the Council's grant aid policy and an

application form please go to <https://www.crediton.gov.uk/Grants>.

Committee members: Frank, Liz, Joyce & John R

### Parish Paths

Cllr Michael Szabo

The 32 Public Rights of Way (PROW) in Crediton are owned by Devon County Council (DCC) who outsource the custodianship of the paths to the Crediton P3 (Parish Paths Partnership) committee. Members identify and photograph any repairs, improvements, or maintenance that is needed and forward it to the PROW officer, Ros Davies, whose team completes the work so all ramblers can safely enjoy the paths. Crediton's PROW warden, Sam Jeffcoat, cuts back any overgrown vegetation every June and September.

Some of last years' accomplishments of the committee include:

- 21st June 2019 - Ramble to celebrate the Summer Solstice
- 29th June 2019 - Procession through the High street to promote and distribute Redvers Ramble leaflets.
- 26 December 2019 - Ramble to celebrate Boxing Day
- Installing 2 Redvers Ramblers oak signs, at Tolleys and inside Peoples Park.
- Installing a handrail on the steep footpath leading from St Saviour's Way to Tin Pot Lane.
- Installing a new metal galvanised bench to replace the original vandalised bench on the footpath which runs from the High street, near the Ivory Secret, to Brays Close, near QE school (Barnfield campus). (This will be installed once the current restrictions have been lifted)

Committee members: Mike, Frank, Liz & John D

### Climate Change & Sustainability

Cllr Brookes-Hocking

This committee was formed in the autumn of 2019. The catalyst was the presentation in June of a letter written by three sisters to the Town Council. The letter highlighted concerns about pollution, land use and plastics, and the effect of these on the climate and the future of the planet. Devon County Council and the government had already declared a climate change emergency so the town council took the decision to do the same and to form the committee to progress plans and actions in Crediton.

As a sub-committee of the council, the membership includes representatives from community groups as well as councillors. Any member of the public can attend meetings and join in the discussions.

The first event planned in mid-February was a Climate Change event to be held at Old Landscore School, with climate change information, activities for all ages and a children's

poster competition. This event fell victim to Storm Dennis and was cancelled due to the violent weather that was forecast for the day. Fortunately, Sustainable Crediton were able to offer space at the Seed Share event at the end of February so the children's Climate Change poster competition went ahead.

Our Climate Emergency Community Conversation scheduled for the end of March fell victim to the lockdown, along with plans for spring litter picks and all further events and meetings. All this will re-start as soon as possible. Whatever the changes brought to daily life following the pandemic, we can be certain that the climate change and environmental challenges will remain.

Committee members: Liz., John D, Louise & Paul

### Christmas in Crediton Cllr Brookes-Hocking

Maskerade! was our 2019 lights Switch-on Event. Hundreds of people gathered in the Town Square to enjoy the singing of Haywards and Landscore schools, music from local bands, morris dancing, food and drink from local producers, and train rides up and down the High Street. As it got dark, the parade formed up led by the town crier and the Mayor with the mask competition winners, followed by the scouts batmobile, the Exeter street band, Turning Tides dragon, and the guides' illuminated arches over the masked children and adults. It made its way down Market Street and into the Square. Father Christmas appeared and the lights in the square were switched on, adding to the town illuminations along the High Street and at St Lawrence Green.

This event is organised every year by the sub-committee of councillors and volunteers working with local businesses and community groups. It takes months of meetings to get everything in place: the road closures, road marshals and event stewards; lighting infrastructure, Christmas trees, the Town Square tree; the entertainers and parade participants. We feel that it is all worthwhile – it is a whole town event that the whole community can take part in as much as they choose.

As we look forward to this November, with possible social restrictions, we can't say what the Switch-on event will be. If we can gather in the square to celebrate the start of the Christmas season together, we will. If not, something will happen. We have managed to get the floral displays up for the summer. So, come the winter season, there will be lights. And they will switch-on.

Committee members: Liz, John R & Louise

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