

Crediton Town Council Annual Report 2020-2021

Your Town Councillors for 2020-2021!

Frank Letch MBE
Joyce Harris
Liz Brookes-Hocking
Jim Cairney
Guy Cochran
John Downes
Steve Huxtable
Louise Martin
John Ross
Mike Szabo
Paul Vincent
Hannah Zorlu

New Committee Structure

Due to responsibilities increasing and diversifying, the town council is at a point where a restructure is required. The new structure detailed below takes effect from May 2021 and allows responsibilities to be evenly distributed across committees, increases transparency when dealing with council finances and contributes to effective budget setting.

Council Affairs and Finance

- Propose budget requirements
- Forward plan & make earmarked reserve recommendations
- Internal control
- Risk assessments
- Personnel
- Insurance
- Policy overview

Planning and Town Strategy

- Planning applications, strategic documents & policies
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Highways & Traffic
- Heritage & Arts
- Town Promotion

Amenities and the Built Environment

- Allotments
- Floral Displays
- Floral Crediton
- Open spaces
- Footpaths

Property and Assets

- Maintenance of council assets
- Development of maintenance programme
- Manage earmarked reserves projects
- Strategies for council assets

Climate Change and Sustainability

- Low carbon policies
- Town Council practices
- Sustainable contracting
- Supporting community to reduce carbon footprint

Grants Sub-Committee

Christmas in Crediton Sub-Committee

Parish Paths Sub- Committee

Finances 1st April 2020 - 31st March 2021

Income and Expenditure Account included. Available in different format on request.

Did you know...? The town council's website contains details of all the town council's finances, including payments, receipts, bank reconciliations, budget and precept information as well as copies of the annual return. Please go to <https://www.crediton.gov.uk/Finances>.

Chairman's Report

Cllr Frank Letch MBE, Mayor & Chairman for 2020-2021

This municipal year has been like no other and mostly because of the covid virus. As members of the public will realise the office has been shut throughout the year and all meetings have been held virtually using zoom.

This has also meant that many of our activities have had to be put on the shelf. There has been no garden competition, allotment judging and Christmas in Crediton live Switch-on event.

We were even unable to run the annual Service of Remembrance but we did manage a small act of recognition at the war memorial on the Sunday and the following Tuesday.

The staff have worked very hard to maintain as normal a service as possible. They have prepared a number of excellent newsletters which have been on display outside the town council building in a large red box. On behalf of all councillors I would like to thank our staff for going the extra mile in carrying out their duties. I would also like to thank the residents of Crediton for being understanding in these difficult times.

Committee Reports 2020-2021

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 or Clerk.

Town Strategy – Cllr Liz Brookes Hocking

This committee comments on planning applications for developments within the town and on plans for the wider area that affect Crediton. It is overseeing the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan.

It also discusses ideas and initiatives for community action and activities within the town. In the last year, these have included:

- the feasibility of taking on Old Landscore School for community use
- an increased commitment to youth work
- a CCTV system for the town centre
- taking on the Newcombes Meadow toilets from the district council
- supporting cultural events and social facilities in the town square when restrictions allow
- reviewing and restarting the Climate Change and Sustainability Sub-committee

Virtual meetings have enabled this committee to continue its work, though at a slower pace because of restrictions preventing on-site meetings and discussions with contractors. However, staff have persevered and by the end of the year had gathered enough advice, information and reports for councillors to be able to make the decision to purchase Old Landscore School. Previous users and new ones are keen to use the building as soon as it can be safely permitted with appropriate facilities. Getting the building useable again will be a priority before we look at options for refurbishing the building for its long-term future as a centre for community groups and services.

Committee members: Liz, Joyce, John D, Frank, John R, Jim, Louise & Guy

Council Affairs Committee - Cllr Joyce Harris

The Council Affairs Committee is responsible for determining the resource requirements of the town council and making recommendations to council. This includes land and property, employees and contracts. In addition to this, the committee oversees the training requirements of councillors and staff, the policies and procedures of the town council, its publicity and public relations, any legal proceedings, electoral matters, insurance arrangements and civic events. Finally it also scrutinises, when required, town council activities and decisions.

Our new clerk, Rachel Avery, joined us in June and as we were in the middle of a pandemic it was a challenging time for her. She is the line manager for the three members of staff who were working from home and she was not able to meet them face to face when she first took over. Rachel has done an amazing job in difficult circumstances and we are pleased she has settled into her role so well. The Town Clerk has also started the process for the town council to attain Quality Gold status in the Local Council Award Scheme.

Two of the office staff are undertaking further training. The Administrative Assistant has passed four modules in the 'Introduction to Local Council Administration' and the Projects Officer is undertaking an Open University course in Project Management.

Committee members: Liz, Joyce, Frank, Hannah, John R, Jim, Louise & Steve

Meet the Team

Left to right: Rachel Avery, *Town Clerk*

Emma Anderson, *Assistant Clerk*

Lisa Blake, *Projects & Services Officer*

Emily Armitage, *Administrative Assistant*

Assets and Amenities Committee – Cllr Joyce Harris

The Assets & Amenities Committee is responsible for overseeing all town council owned and leased open spaces, parks, gardens and play areas. All town council owned/maintained property is regularly inspected by staff with work carried out when necessary. This also includes essential tree works. Following a recent inspection of trees on town council land, work has been carried out at Peoples Park and Stonypark to ensure the safety of the public and allow the park and its wildlife to thrive.

The committee accepted an offer from a local resident to repair the fingerpost that was damaged at the top of Jockey Hill. After the Boniface Statue was covered in graffiti, it was agreed to investigate the possibility of getting a Portland Stone specialist to apply anti-graffiti sealant. It was also agreed that the current defibrillator scheme will be renewed for a further four years.

The committee also oversees the cleaning of the bus shelters, the supply and filling of grit bins and will be responsible for all benches in the town. We have also agreed to take over the supply and planting of summer bedding at the East Street/Charlotte Street junction, the Union Road wall and beds near the St Boniface Statue following Mid Devon District Council's withdrawal of the service.

The town council has over 130 allotments spread over three sites. The Administrative Assistant 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.

We are fortunate to have several volunteers and community groups in Crediton who are committed to making the town look its best. Whether it be litter picking, weed killing or looking after the flower beds, planters and wildlife areas, we really couldn't achieve so much without them.

Committee members: Joyce, John R, Frank, Mike, Hannah, Jim, Louise & Guy

Climate Change and Sustainability Committee – Rachel Avery, Town Clerk

Up to lockdown, the Climate Change and Sustainability Sub-Committee operated without a full-time clerk or administration services. During this year, the committee reviewed its arrangements and now the town council has agreed to upgrade it from a sub-committee to a committee serviced by the Town Clerk and reporting directly to the full Town Council.

The committee met for the first time in April, with Cllr Paul Vincent being elected as Chairman. Working within a new set of Terms of Reference, it is hoped that the committee will be able to assess town council policy to reflect a determination to deal with climate change and facilitate the community in achieving a lower carbon footprint.

Committee members: Paul, Liz, John D, John R, Guy, Steve

Parish Paths Sub-Committee – Emma Anderson, Assistant Clerk

The Parish Paths Committee met three times during the year to discuss the general condition of the paths in and around the town and agree any actions/repairs required. With the help of PROW officer Mrs Ros Davies, the Committee aims to ensure that all footpaths are in good condition and accessible for all to enjoy.

Between December and February, committee members head out to inspect the footpaths in order to complete the annual surveys. Accessibility is checked as well as the need for any repairs, such as fallen gates. The town council is always open to local walkers reporting any problems they have on our footpaths and one of the best ways to do this is via Devon County Council's online Report It system. These reports are sent directly to Crediton's local footpath warden, with a site visit being carried out as soon as possible to assess the problem.

The Committee recently agreed to hold the annual anniversary event of the Redvers Ramble walk later in the year. This will be taking place on Saturday 19 June 2021, subject to covid guidelines at the time. Please check our website and social media pages for updates.

You can also expect to see a new Crediton Footpaths Facebook page appearing soon! The launch of this Facebook page was agreed at the last meeting, where members wanted to provide fellow walkers with a space to share walks, report problems and generally share their experiences of Crediton's many footpaths.

Copies of suggested walking routes in Crediton can be found on our website and in the Redvers Ramble & Other Walks leaflet.

Committee members: Frank, Liz, Louise & John D

Grants Sub-Committee – Cllr Frank Letch

The Grants Sub-Committee met in November 2020 where members discussed and allocated the majority of the grants made for the financial year 2021/22. A second meeting was held in January 2021 when the rest of the grants were allocated. The total amount allocated for 2021/22 so far is £23,759.95, representing 7% of the town council's total precept.

The committee looks very carefully at the previous year's report from the applicants and makes sure the grants awarded will benefit the people of Crediton. In this very difficult year, it has been ever more pressing for the town council to make these payments to help several organisations carry on their much-needed services within the town.

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

Christmas in Crediton Sub-Committee – Cllr Liz Brookes-Hocking

A Hattastic Christmas in Crediton had a lot of familiar ingredients – illuminations around the town, a huge Christmas tree in the Square, announcements from the Town Cryer, school choirs, Father Christmas, a hat competition and a switch on event – but... no parade and no people crowding into the town square to watch it all. Oh, no! Covid!

But it was possible to join in and make a hat – lots of children did. Empty shop windows in the High Street were filled with hats from Haywards and Landscore schools, with the scouts and guides decorating the windows to make festive displays. The school choirs uploaded videos of their performances to the Christmas in Crediton Facebook page. Father Christmas also made his appearance online and everyone could watch the lights being switched on.

Of course, we would rather have had the Switch-on event we are used to, with music, singing and dancing the square, the fancy dress parade and the winners switching on the lights. If we can do it in 2021, we will. But we're also preparing for an event without crowds because we might not be able to gather together like we used to. Whatever happens, we'll put more of the event online. For people who can't come out, it's a way of them being a part of our Christmas community celebration to which everyone is welcome.

Without the dedication of everyone involved in this year's event, we would not have been able to achieve any of it. So here is a huge thank you to...

- Hedgerow Print
- Crediton Dairy
- Create Storage
- Christmas in Crediton Committee volunteers
- Jo Ward
- Roger Pennington
- Roger Lee
- Tom Coomer
- Boniface Rotary
- Kevin Payne
- Father Christmas
- Tesco
- Morrisons
- Reverend Tregenza
- Alison Richardson
- Rivka Jacobs
- The Symes Family
- Carter Geering

- Kathea Owners
- Sunflowers Nursery
- Pippins Nursery
- Haywards Primary School
- Landscore Primary School

...And to all of the Crediton Community who helped in any way!

Old Landscore School Sub-Committee – Cllr John Ross

The town council have decided to purchase the building, keeping it in public ownership with a view to creating a great community space.

During the Tenancy At Will period, a range of community groups used the space and provided positive feedback. We have also had meaningful conversations with existing groups in the town for long term use of the space.

We undertook a feasibility survey which showed that there was a need for additional community space in the town, and as a result of an extensive building survey and discussions with architects we look forward to working on this exciting project and engaging with the community along the way.

Committee members: John R, Liz, Joyce & Frank

The Crediton Community

This year's covid-friendly Annual Town Meeting looked a little different, held virtually via Zoom. Nonetheless, it was agreed for community consultation events to take place throughout the summer, helping the town council to shape its future activities and priorities. So there will be lots of opportunities coming up for you to have your say.

CCTV demos taking place in the Town Square in readiness for the installation of the new town centre CCTV system! With a system covering the High Street, Town Square and Newcombes Meadow it is hoped this will significantly help towards deterring crime and anti-social behaviour, making the town a safer place for the entire community.

St Lawrence Green ready for it's summer planting, with the area now being successfully maintained by the St Lawrence Group under the direction of Sustainable Crediton, with plants and supplies funded by the town council.

Our new maintenance team! Turning Tides members carrying out just one of many maintenance jobs around the town. Whether it's cleaning the Newcombes Meadow toilet or litter picking in the various parks and open spaces, this partnership has proved a huge success in helping to keep the town looking its best.

And finally, thanks to Nick Way, our county councillor from May 2005 to May 2021, for all his work for the Crediton community during that time.

Britain in Bloom Update – Cllr Mike Szabo

Last year all the entries into Britain in Bloom (BIB) were rolled over into 2021. So, Crediton has 24 entries into the It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) programme, including both primary schools, and the town itself is entered into the Pennant award competition.

The judges will visit Crediton sometime in July and assess the town and organisations on Community participation, Environmental responsibility, and Gardening achievement and then give constructive feedback and support to all participating organisations.

The Awards Presentation will take place in Western Super Mare on 7 October and Crediton will host a local Awards Presentation the following week.

Coronavirus Update – What to Expect!

There is no doubt the past year has created its challenges and with face-to-face meetings returning, we wanted to give you an update in relation to the easing of lockdown restrictions.

In line with legislation, parish and town councils resumed face-to-face meetings on 7 May. Our meetings will now be taking place at Old Landscore School and will be livestreamed to our Facebook feed. To ensure we adhere to Covid-19 regulations, members of the public wishing to ask questions are requested to submit them to the Town Clerk prior to meetings and watch via Facebook.

Currently, the Council Office is closed to visitors. We will continue to review the government's guidance on this and will update our website and social media pages when we know more. For now, office staff will continue to answer calls/respond to emails from Monday to Friday between 10.00 am to 2.00 pm, so please call/email if you would like to get in touch.

Contact details can be found below.

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