



Credition Town Council



Minutes of Credition Annual Town Meeting held on 25th March 2014, at 7.00pm, in the Council Chamber, Market Street, Credition

Present: Credition Town Councillors Mr F Letch (Chairman), Mrs J Harris, Mr A Wyer, Mrs E Brookes-Hocking, Mr P Vincent, Mrs A Hughes, Ms Ford, Mr N Way, Mr J Downes, Mr M Szabo ,
Electors of the Parish, Members of the Public, 1 member of the Press

In Attendance: Mrs C Dalley, Town Clerk

1 Welcomes and Introductions

The Mayor and Chairman of Credition Town Council, Councillor Frank Letch, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Minutes of Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 30th April 2013, were confirmed as a correct record with one correction to minute number 3a replacing the word 'Methodist' with 'Congregational' and were duly signed by Councillor Letch.

3 To receive reports from:

a) Chairman Credition Town Council

Cllr Letch started by commenting that it was so nice to see so many people at the meeting, he then presented a report as follows:

- Keeping the number of Town Councillors to 12 has proven challenging, a few people have resigned during the year. The Council is currently one Councillor down with a vacancy to be filled by co-option. If anyone is interested in becoming a Councillor please get in touch.
- The Town Council has funded various activities throughout the Town including:
 - Flag project - this was absolutely wonderful and lit up the High Street.
 - Christmas parade – this was the first time so many people had been gathered in the Square, approx 600-800 people. It was an outstanding success thanks to the Christmas in Credition Group and the Arts Centre.
 - Scout Memorial Garden – what a great difference the access pathway has made now it is finished. The Scouts and Guides and other groups in the community will be working hard to keep the gardens up to scratch. Mr Barry Shears from Hillbrow Residential Care Home will this year be presenting the Hillbrow Cup to the best youth garden. It is hoped that the two primary schools in the Town will join in the competition.
 - Peoples Park wildlife garden – this is another new project and with the help of community payback, who have provided approximately 480 hours of labour, an area of approx 400 square metres has been cleared and weed suppressant membrane laid. With the help of volunteers we are now looking for bark to be spread over the top of the membrane and the area to be planted.
 - Floral Credition competition – this garden competition, goes from strength to strength. Last year there were approximately 30 entries and we would like even more this year.

- We are very lucky to have such an active Boniface Allotment Association. Their recent work to solve drainage problems at Exhibition Road allotments is an excellent example of the community working together to solve a problem.
- The Town Council can act as a buffer between the community's anxieties and the two tiers of government above us, these being Mid Devon District Council and Devon County Council. The Town Council is currently pursuing several issues on behalf of the Crediton community which are as follows:
 - Mid Devon District Council's proposals to close St Lawrence Green public toilets as they believe they are not used enough.
 - Mid Devon District Council's decision to introduce overnight charges in St Saviours Way car park.
 - Devon County Council's proposals to close residential care homes and day care centres. The County Council has hosted several consultation events to explain their proposals for the future provision of these services however; you do get the impression the decisions have already been made. Attempts are being made to get the heads of departments together to come up with a joint plan and joint budget for residential care and day care. There is money to create dementia centres of excellence, as there are only two in the whole of Devon (one in Torrington and one in Newton Abbott). The facility at St Lawrence could receive some of the budget to become one of those centres. It could also be a hub, a day centre for people with mental health issues.
- The Town Council has put pressure on Crediton Chamber of Commerce due to its lack of communication. The Chamber is now having a general meeting in April, the Town Council is not invited as it is not a paid up member, although it has always been invited in the past. The Town Council contacted the Chamber regarding its support for hanging baskets in the High Street for this year's Floral Crediton; the Chamber has ordered two. At one time there used to be over 100 in the High Street, mostly paid for by the Chamber of Commerce
- Town Square – the Town Council wants to take over the ownership and management of the Town Square and has had to fight hard to stop Mid Devon District Council from charging community groups to use the square. The maintenance of the Square is losing Mid Devon District Council over £2,000 a year. By allowing the Town Council to take over the ownership and management we would ensure its free use to all community groups.
- Last year we said we wanted to review the office opening hours and we are hoping to do this very shortly. Currently the office is open two days a week; we hope to make it five days a week, providing people with increased opportunity to access the Town Council and its services.
- Mayor's Surgery – these continue on a monthly basis on the Town Square. It is an excellent opportunity to be moaned at and gain feedback on what the Town Council is doing. If you don't think we are doing a good job then tell us. The surgery is also an opportunity to give out literature, such as the Town Newsletter. Thanks go to Cllr Brookes-Hocking and the Town Clerk for their hard work with the Newsletter.

Cllr Letch concluded his report by stating that he had enjoyed his year in office, it has been a lot more challenging but in a nice way, with the support of the office staff, Clare and Martin, and fellow Councillors, especially his wonderful second in command Joyce Harris. He then thanked everyone for attending.

b) Mid Devon District Council Ward Members

District Councillor John Downes advised there were two things he wished to report on:

- The Local Development Plan – he encouraged everyone in the community to take the opportunity to comment on the plans. He added that Crediton Town had come off quite well as Mid Devon District Council are concentrating on larger

developments in Cullompton and Tiverton, therefore, Crediton is looking to grow organically with no really large areas earmarked in Crediton.

- Mid Devon District Council budget cuts – there have been cuts in the level of government grant received by the district council in the last four years. To date the district council has been able to maintain front line services despite these funding cuts, however, this year it is likely to be different. There will be reductions in services coming forward such as play areas, open spaces, toilets and rubbish collection. This year we could see proposals for services to be reduced or closed. He advised everyone that it is important they are aware of services and if they feel strongly about them make sure Councillors are aware as the greatest thing is public support.

c) **Devon County Council Ward Member**

County Councillor Nick Way reported as follows:

- The County Council budget is being reduced each year and will continue to be reduced over the next four years.
- The works for the new link road are on schedule and it will be opening by autumn 2014.
- There is much talk of opening up the old rail link between Okehampton and Tavistock and this is not as out of the way as you may think. There will be a meeting shortly with Devon Heartland to consider running a train from Okehampton to Yeoford and then on to Exeter. From Crediton's point of view this would be good and a step in the right direction. Watch this space.
- Budget cuts – the proposed cuts in the youth service are very concerning. Our youth centre is very well used with approx 80 youths attending per week. Devon County Council is currently looking for expressions of interest from organisations interested in taking on the centre and its service. It's a big ask but someone may be interested in putting a community enterprise together to provide the service. Cllr Letch mentioned day care services, this is a real problem for many families, as they could find adult learning centre could be a casualty of the cuts and could be closed. Many people feel the decisions have already been made. Recently, the Devon County Council administration wouldn't allow the young people to speak at a meeting regarding the youth service cuts and he feels this was a disgrace. A proposal is now being put forward for an Extraordinary Meeting of Devon County Council so the cuts can be discussed by the whole Council and not just the cabinet members.
- Road maintenance and the dreaded potholes – there has been a massive increase in potholes due to the bad weather this year; and the back log from last year. Devon County Council is concentrating on A and B roads (the salting network) and potholes are being cleared within two weeks of being reported. The unclassified roads have a backlog of up to two months. The government has given £7 million towards road maintenance but Devon would need three times that amount to bring its roads up to scratch.
- Locality and TAP Funding - these are two funding pots available to community organisations. This year funding has been given to many local organisations including the Citizens Advice Bureau, Crediton flag project, Senior Council of Devon.

d) **Town Council Members and Representatives**

Crediton Town Councillor Szabo reported that for the last three years community groups in Crediton have entered the RHS 'It's Your Neighbourhood' competition. In the first year there was one entry, in the second year there were three entries, this year there are nine entries. It is a friendly competition aimed at cleaning up and greening up the local environment. The judging will take place in July.

4 To receive further information regarding Crediton Neighbourhood Plan

The Clerk provided further information regarding the Crediton Neighbourhood Plan. She encouraged everyone in Crediton to engage in the process. At present, this can be done by completing the feedback forms available at the meeting that ask the following 3 questions:

- What do you think the big issues are in Crediton at the moment?
- What do you like most about living in Crediton?
- What do you like least about living in Crediton?

5 To receive a presentation from Crediton Town Team

An overview of how the Crediton Town Team had been formed was provided together with details of their current ideas.

Following Crediton Festival's huge success last year the Town and District Council asked the festival committee to take on a new concept called the Town Team, which is a steering group working towards the future development and regeneration of the town. A big part of that is putting on a festival next year and they are already starting to gather that team together. It was also to think what other projects might be useful to help the Town. The team then gave an overview of their ideas so far, which are as follows:

- Festival theme – we have a fantastic foundation in the food festival. Can we weave local food production through the whole of Crediton festival, working with the food festival committee? We have a rich and varied array of local food producers. It would not threaten any other functions of the festival but would weave through it. If anyone has any ideas please let the team know.
- Town Square canopy – to enable all year round use of the town square and enable events to take place whatever the weather. There will be a workshop on Saturday 21st June 2014, to explore this idea with the community as there are many things that need to be taken into consideration. The team would encourage everyone to attend the workshop on the 21st June.
- St Boniface – capitalise on St Boniface and the interest there is around the world. Could we do more with St Boniface and make it more of an event and occasion for people visiting the town. The team is currently looking for ideas to make Crediton a distinct and strong St Boniface link. They are currently looking at setting up a separate group to do this.
- Flag project – the flag project stood alone as a Crediton Arts Centre project, but it was crucial in lifting the whole of the Town. It was so successful that it has been decided to run the project again. Last year 40 flags were made due to a large amount of funding being received from the High Street innovation fund. Funding has been raised this year to make a further 15 flags. The aim is to bring the project to the Town Square and the intention is to make vertical banners to hang on the lampposts. The Arts Centre will be talking to business around the Town Square shortly. The first of 13 workshops will start on 13th April 2014, and the flags will go up in May.

6 Public Forum - Open Questions from Electors

A member of the public said that it was refreshing that so much is being done in the Town and congratulated those that are contributing to the Town. This was echoed by another resident who thanked the Town Team and the Town Council all of whom give up a lot of their time.

The following questions were raised and comments made:

- The Town Square canopy and the size of it, will there would be any weighting given to the views of the people that live and work around the Square? Members of the Town Team advised that everything was being considered and nothing was written in stone. The workshop on 21st June will ask questions such as; which events should a canopy cover and which parts of the square should it cover? etc...
- From reading the local strategic plan, Mid Devon District Council's attitude towards Neighbourhood Plans is lukewarm, as they do not appear to see the need for them. The support of the District Council is crucial in the neighbourhood planning process and therefore the District Council needs a change of attitude. Cllr John Downes stated that just because the District Council doesn't want it to happen doesn't mean it won't happen.
- Councils are elected by people and if people are behind a neighbourhood Plan the Councils will have to accept that. It was suggested that efforts should be made to create a neighbourhood plan rather than worrying about who is going to back creating one.
- Crediton Hospital is on the agenda for the future; it is inevitable hospital beds will close, if not the complete unit. It is no good having a banner, the only way we will save the hospital is to feed in good ideas, so we may keep it. As a Town we need to come up with some ideas, for example can the hospital do respite care? We all need to think about it.
- Crediton Dementia Action Alliance has succeeded in Crediton becoming a dementia friendly town.
- Both Crediton Primary Schools are close to becoming full. Devon County Council is carrying out a feasibility study looking at expansion of both sites. Both schools have had very outline plans drawn up to increase capacity. How would this filter into the Neighbourhood Planning process? Members of the Town Council expressed surprise at this news, as they were unaware of the situation. Cllr Brookes-Hocking confirmed this information was required for neighbourhood planning as school places have to be provided and thought needs to be given to whether Crediton wants two large schools or three smaller schools. It is understood the Medical Centres are also nearing capacity.

7 Close

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.28 pm

Signed:

(Councillor F Letch)

Date:.....