



**Minutes of Credition Town Council Extraordinary Meeting, held on
Friday, 7th March 2014, at 6pm, at the Council Chamber, Market Street, Credition**

Present: Cllrs F Letch (Chairman), Mr M Szabo, Mr A Wyer, Mrs E Brookes-Hocking, Mr R Adams, Mr P Vincent and Mr N Way
Mrs Clare Dalley, Town Clerk

In Attendance: Mid Devon District Councillor M Binks, 1 member of the press 3 members of the public

Before the meeting commenced the Mayor, Cllr Letch, expressed his personal thanks to the Town Clerk, Sue Read from the Credition Courier and Mel Stride MP for attending the meeting.

- 1403/240 **To receive and accept apologies**
Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs J Harris and G Ford (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking, seconded by Cllr Way)
- 1403/241 **Declarations of Interest**
None declared.
- 1403/242 **To meet with Mel Stride MP and discuss a list of questions/issues prepared by Credition Town Council.**
A copy of the list of agreed questions/issues had been circulated with the agenda. Cllr Letch put each question/issue to Mr Stride, who provided an answer.
1. Please can you help us sort out the mess of our dual use/parking bays, which constantly entrap residents and visitors of Credition and stop them coming to the Town. With the government's aim to create a climate that empowers local people and communities, building a "big society" that will take power away from politicians and give it to people, the present situation is unsatisfactory.
Mr Stride firstly thanked the Council for inviting him to attend the meeting, adding that of all 125 parish councils in his constituency none were as agreeable as Credition. This issue had been looked into over a number of months and the situation under the current regulation is that dual use parking/loading bays must be stated as such via a sign on a pole. The problems experienced by Credition are very clear and Mr Stride has taken it up with Patrick McLoughlin, Secretary of State for Transport and Norman Baker, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Transport. Their responses have been firstly, government cannot change rules for one particular location; secondly the reason why you can't put signage on the road surface is because of it getting covered over, for example by snow or dirt. Mr Stride added that any further pushing is not likely to gain a different answer.
 2. What is being done to ensure the wider recycling of all plastics in Credition?
The recycling of plastics is an important pursuit and the recycling of plastics in Credition is a local issue. He would urge the Council to advertise and encourage people to use the facilities offered by Sustainable Credition. The government has the Recycling Credit scheme which aims to incentivise the collection and recycling of household waste for local authorities and third parties.
 3. What is being done to ensure a coordinated strategy for wind turbines and solar farms?
Mr Stride stated he was intrigued by the question. He added that the country has an obligation to meet renewable energy targets, which is a binding commitment entered into with the European Union. The government is attempting to meet

these targets via the Energy Bill and Electricity Market Reform (EMR), which contains a whole series of reforms, including the planning system, feed in tariffs, and on and off shore wind and solar power. Mr Stride added that with on and off shore wind we need to be careful about environmental impact.

4. How can we make local (especially planning) decisions effective when they can be overruled by other agencies? For example, the land at Fordton (planning application number 12/00459/MOUT) being turned down for industrial development by us and MDDC and the inspector overruling it on appeal – making nonsense of the LDF and potentially NP.

We have moved from a very centralised system of planning, which was the Regional Spatial Strategy, to the Local Development Framework, which is the principle vehicle by which future planning occurs. There is always going to be tension between appeal and what the local community want. It is important you have a robust Local Development Framework and that local people have been widely consulted and involved. Prior to the meeting Mr Stride had spoken to Peter Hare-Scott, Leader, Mid Devon District Council regarding this specific planning application and advised that if the Town Council wished to delve into the details it would be beneficial to invite Mr Jonathan Guscott, Head of Planning & Regeneration at Mid Devon District Council to a Town Council meeting.

5. Will you assist us in lobbying for the Wellparks Estate to be made well connected by pedestrian access to the rest of the Town, as at the moment there are no crossing points on Exeter Road.

This is clearly a local matter and interesting that as an MP there is presumption that an MP can have an overarching authority, however, the power on these issues rests with the Local Planning Authority. However, if it is helpful for your local MP to stand up and back it, then that is something he would very seriously consider.

6. Where did the employment law about offering 6 months / 12 months full / part pay for public sector works originate? Why is it impossible to sack public sector workers? Will these laws ever be reviewed?

Mr Stride didn't understand the first part of question and so Cllr Letch clarified this. Mr Stride stated that the general view is that the terms of employment in the public sector are often more generous in terms of employment protection, however, it is possible to sack public sector workers. There is a debate regarding how easy it is and Mr Stride gave an example regarding teachers. He added that recently the government has brought in further legislation regarding tribunals and employment disputes whereby the employee is required to pay some costs towards a tribunal and arbitration must be entered into before a case is taken to tribunal.

7. Are MP's required to swear an oath of allegiance before taking office and if so to whom?

Yes to HM The Queen and Her Successors. You may do this by placing your hand on the religious text of your choice or, give an affirmative oath that has no religious context.

8. Conservative party policy is to increase vat yet in 5 EU countries they have lowered vat to 5% on food sales in restaurants, cafes, pubs, and hospitality businesses where meals are served. This has resulted in thousands of jobs being created often for the young or people with low skills and it also offers them a viable career opportunity. Since Crediton has many coffee shops why has this vat reduction not been pursued?

I have great sympathy with getting taxes down especially those that have a detrimental effect on helping the economy. The VAT rate is very unfavourable to those in the hospitality trade, however the Treasury won't reduce it because of the dead weight cost. The estimated loss if it was applied to accommodation and food retailers would be £12 billion per year. If you accept the argument that we have to

get the deficit down that £12 billion would have to be found elsewhere. However, where we do differ from other European countries is that we have a high threshold in terms of turnover before you have to pay VAT at all.

9. How do you feel about developments on flood plains?

Generally negative, if there is an alternative then it should be pursued. Where flood plains are being used it should be where the risk of flooding is lowest. The Environment Agency is a statutory consultee and in 99% of cases where the Environment Agency has objected the development has not gone through.

10. What are your comments on current farming practices, which increase run off?

In light of recent experiences over the last few months, we really need to think carefully about how we improve resilience. The government is investing £2.5 billion per year. There is interesting work that needs to be done in weighing up the benefits of helping farmers to improve flooding and run off. DEFRA and the National Trust have a scheme running, however, there is not a huge amount of practical data. South West Water also has various projects to reduce the risk of flooding.

11. Will you support the increase in license fees for late night establishments to cover the cost of the extra policing?

Government has new legislation that permits local authorities to make a late night levy in respect of premises selling alcohol between midnight and 6 am. However, this has to be universally applied to the whole area, you can't pick and choose. It is probably more applicable to city/urban areas rather than doing it across Mid Devon. It has to be decided at a local level.

Cllr Brookes-Hocking thanked Mr Stride for his answers in particular question 5 adding that it would be very helpful as the situation Mr Stride describes does exist. She also provided clarification to Mr Stride regarding question 4, commenting that a meeting with Mr Guscott would not help the situation as the planners were just as frustrated with the decision as the Town Council. Cllr Brookes-Hocking continued that she appreciated all Mr Stride had done regarding the dual use loading/parking bays and asked what advice he could give the Council in explaining to government that the policy does not work, she added that other areas must also be affected. There was a general discussion regarding how to alleviate the problems being experienced and alternative options, these included, making the lines surrounding the bays yellow, investigating what other countries do, engaging with parking enforcement officers. Mr Stride commented that whilst being knocked back time and time again, many issues are changed by constantly banging on about them and continuing to put pressure on ministers/government regarding the issue. Mr Stride invited Councillor Brookes-Hocking to Westminster for a meeting with the Minister, which she accepted.

Cllr Adams, asked if Mr Stride would be able to support the re-opening of a main line railway through Crediton and Okehampton. Mr Stride said yes, the peninsula has major problems with transport resilience. Currently there are real issues when the weather gets bad and the South West is cut off. Government are very aware of this and with what has happened at Dawlish this opportunity has come our way. He has been involved in meetings at Okehampton, to discuss the best possible chance of investment occurring in a new route, which would be hugely beneficial. There was then discussion surrounding different options for main line railways in the South West and the need for a cohesive argument, especially as different areas will argue for different routes.

Mr Stride was also asked about the recent bill in parliament regarding the level of funding in the South West and the disparity between rural and urban counties. Mr Stride commented that arguably we are not getting our share of funding and there is a battle to be had.

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Public Question Time

There were questions from the member of the public as follows:

- Mr Strides views on Crediton hospital. Mr Stride advised there are huge changes in the NHS, driven by the expanding cost of providing healthcare, new technologies, general costs of delivery and care services are going up. There are also demographic issues, we are aging as a population, the length of retirement has doubled since the 1970s placing huge stresses on the NHS. We need to look closely at how we deliver those services and it may be that in certain circumstances local hospital services need to be looked at.

Anne Hughes arrived 6.51 pm.

- Is Mr Stride happy with what his government has done regarding the defence of this country? Mr Stride advised that perspective was required. The UK is a mid ranking global power and has the 4th largest defence budget. You have to accept that in terms of conventional engagements we won't be able to engage on two fronts as we have done in the past. The nature of the threat needs to be looked at, gone are the days when the Soviet Union would roll tanks across the ground, we are now more concerned about terrorist groups, Al-Qaeda etc.

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Close

Cllr Letch thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 6.54 pm.

Signed.....(Chairman) Date:.....