



**Minutes of the of Credition Town Council Meeting held on
Tuesday 24 January 2023 at 19.00 at Old Landscore School, Greenway, Credition**

Present: Cllrs E Brookes-Hocking, J Downes, J Harris, M Szabo, F Letch, N Letch, D Ross, G Cochran, G Fawssett, J Cairney and S Huxtable

Apologies: Cllr S Chenore

In Attendance: R Avery - Town Clerk
1 member of the press
4 members of the public

2301/089 Public Question Time

The following statements and questions had been raised by a member of the public not in attendance:

- *I am appalled at the proposed 17% increase in the precept for the year 2023/2024 following on massive percentage increases over the last few years. Have the councillors no idea about financial restraint in difficult times?*

Members of the Council Affairs and Finance Committee had met several times to consider the budget and precept to ensure value for money.

Cllr Ross joined the meeting at 19.04

- *I note that it is proposed that some £60,000 should be spent on youth services. I am aware that there are many other opportunities for youth in this town. Has the council set up youth services in competition with the existing opportunities or is it gradually becoming a youth service in itself?*

It is not a youth service in itself, nor is it in competition with the existing youth provision in the town; it is carefully coordinated to ensure there is provision for young people on as many afternoons/evenings as possible.

- *How does this massive expenditure and large percentage of the precept benefit the majority of the town's population?*

There are several hundred young people living in Credition and the opportunity to join Youth Club and other projects/activities is available to them all, but it is recognised that some members of the community will not feel happy about contributing to it.

The following questions had been raised by a member of the public on behalf of the Independents for Credition group:

- *Will the town council request the Mayor to make a public statement calling for local residents to 1) clean up after their dogs and 2) keep pavements outside their homes clear of snow, ice and leaves – to prevent accidents and to improve the visual appeal of the urban environment?*

The town council encourages dog owners to clean up after their dogs by providing dog bins in suitable locations and meeting the cost of dog waste collections that are

not covered by the district council. The town council provides free dog waste bags and publishes the 'Keep Crediton Clean' leaflet.

Most residents who are able to, will, without being asked, clear the pavements outside their houses if they perceive that their condition is hazardous to others. If any member of the council wishes the Mayor to make such a statement, they can request it.

- *What progress has the town council made in addressing the deteriorating appearance of bus shelters outside Lloyds Bank and at St Lawrence Green? (The Chair indicated 2/3 years ago that this would be achieved 'soon')*

Two bus shelters have been installed on the A377 at Well Parks roundabout. The sedum roofs will be added in the spring when the weather warms up. The other bus shelters in the town centre locations are due to be installed in the spring.

- *Will the town council congratulate Independents for Crediton group for initiating a meeting between the developers of children's homes at Newcombes and the residents of Clifford Gardens, Newcombes, Lennard Road and Orchard Close etc?*

No congratulations will be given. This question is not about the work of the council. Community groups are free to organise meetings as they choose. Residents are free to attend them or not. The council responds to requests received from residents affected by issues it can help with directly or by advice.

- *The Chair recently said that in consultations took place with the public, hanging baskets were among residents' highest priorities for the town.) What public consultations has the town council undertaken re raising the Precept for 2023/24 by 17%? In setting this budget, to what extent has the council taken into account voters' concerns re the cost of living crisis? (How many more 'cups of coffee per month' will the new tax hike cost?!!)*

The town council's survey at the end of last year showed by a measure of 3/2 that residents were willing to see the precept rise in order to pay for services that they considered important. These included: youth services, public toilets, CCTV, clean streets, public events. In previous consultations between 2012 and 2019, residents strongly supported investment in the town centre, including improvements to street furniture and floral decorations.

- *What is the expiry date of the Section 106 funds (£234,000) for Newcombes Meadow? What project or projects has the town council now identified as most benefiting future users of the park and how shall we judge this town council if these funds are lost?)*

2027. The funding is for 'play and associated facilities'. We have been discussing with the district council what breadth of project this could cover. We would like to provide improved toilet facilities and re-landscaping of the jubilee garden, but these have not yet been agreed as fulfilling the criteria. If the funds are lost, the town council may be judged poorly, but we don't think they will be lost as we are in discussion with MDDC on these funds. It is the district council's responsibility to authorise S106 spending. The town council has no powers over it whatsoever. We are of the opinion that S106 funding is poorly dealt with by the district council and have made this point very strongly recently. We are hoping for further meetings to address the issue of infrastructure funding in Crediton through S106.

- *One town councillor estimates that it might cost up to '£300 per flush' to maintain the public toilets at Newcombes Meadow. Does the Town Council consider this good value?*

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No comment will be given on an unattributed estimate. If the question is generally about value for money in relation to public toilets, the town council would like to see them operating at a better value and benefitting everyone more. At present, they are no value to anyone as they are closed following vandalism. Over the last two years, deliberate damage to the toilets had cost over £2000.00 not including the most recent vandalism. Some of the cost has been recovered through insurance (which has an effect on the insurance premium) and through victim resolution whereby some remuneration was received from the perpetrator.

- *Re the King's coronation occasion and the Big Help Out on Monday 8 May, encouraging community volunteer work, will the Town Council be repeating the Community Action Day that you organised last year? Would the council wish Independents for Crediton to co-ordinate community work on this date, given the numerous environmental clearing of weeds etc we have carried out during the last 18 months?*

The town council will work on Coronation events in consultation with community groups who want to take part. Any community group that works with volunteers is welcome to propose activities for the Big Help Out day that people can volunteer to join in with. The Town Council will co-ordinate activities and advise groups in line with information that will be available to the voluntary and community sector, including local councils. This may include best practice such as safeguarding and risk management when working with new and existing volunteers

- *The Town Clerk advises that the council's youth work costs £60,000 a year (for 7.5 hours a week, attended by up to 45 young people). Does the Town Council consider this good value?*

This question is misleading and is a misrepresentation of information that you have already been given. Your bracketed clause is incorrect. Please refer to the information which was emailed to you on 18th January by the town clerk in response to this question that you have already addressed to her, and which is appended to these replies to your questions. As you will know, if you have read that email, the youth service operated by the town council involves far more than 7.5 hours a week for 45 young people.

- *Local window-cleaning firms have indicated that they would be willing to undertake the watering off hanging baskets at a fraction of the price charged by outside suppliers. What has the town council done to approach these local businesses?*

The town council has no knowledge of this claim of local firms willing to undertake the work mentioned nor the price for which they might do it. Tenders for the work were publicised in accordance with legal requirements and were put up on the council website and Facebook page. Some local firms were approached with no response. For your information, contracts over £10000.00 must be publicised on the government's website Contract Finder, so that businesses can bid. This has done with the current contracts that have just been approved for tender and information is on the council's website.

- *With reference to discussions 3 years ago, after what period in office does the Town Council recommend that the Chair of Crediton Town Council should stand down to make way for another member?*

The matter would require a change to Standing Orders and the next council that will be elected in May will be asked to approve or amend Standing Orders as one of its

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first decisions.

A member of the public asked Cllr F Letch whether it was his responsibility to represent the views of his constituents when acting in his capacity as a District Councillor. Cllr F Letch responded that it was his responsibility, but when considering planning applications, district councillors were only able to make decisions based on relevant legislation and planning matters.

2301/090 To receive and accept apologies

It was **resolved** to approve apologies from Cllr Chenore. (Proposed by Cllr Szabo).

2301/091 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs F Letch, Cairney and Downes declared that as members of more than one authority, that any views or opinions expressed at this meeting would be provisional and would not prejudice any views expressed at a meeting of another authority.

2301/092 To receive reports from County and District Councillors

County Cllr Letch:

- DCC Health and Wellbeing Board – recruitment of interim and permanent staff for psychology service
- Community Catalyst project – to get small groups to start care services. 60 groups initially signed up, and there are now 25 members with small community care systems
- Covid – rates are fairly stable. As of 2 weeks ago, 95 people were hospitalised with covid and additional health issues
- One Devon – investigating various areas of challenges including an aging population, varied education needs, unpaid care givers and pressure on services
- National Health Joint Plan – amalgamation of some health services and figures suggest numbers of smokers and smoking related illnesses are lower in Devon than any other part of the UK
- Concessionary bus fares are due to be increased by 30%, with Liberal Democrats asking why such a high increase is needed.

District Cllr Letch:

- Wellparks Commercial Centre and accommodation – approved by the Planning and Town Strategy Committee, but planning officer has reservations around overdevelopment. Viability of commercial units may prevent S106 contributions. The application will be considered by the MDDC Planning Committee in March.

District Cllr Downes:

- Levelling Up Fund – first tranche of funding has been approved, and second tranche likely. Central Government has given six weeks to spend this year's allocation as approval was late, but it is hoped that some funds can be carried over. £2m has been awarded to the district to be spent over 3 years, with most of the funding in the second two years.
- Extra meeting of MDDC to discuss the Three Rivers business plan. Cabinet passed decision to council which has caused delay. The vote went against approval of business plans with a strong majority on the basis that it was a cabinet decision that should have been made many months ago. The damaging downside is that if cabinet uses council decision not to approve plans, there will be a hole in the projected budget for this year and following as budgets have been based on the income from

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Three Rivers, meaning significant funds will need to be found. Town and parish councils have a right to increase precepts but cuts that district councils will have to make will not be compensated by the precepts being raised by councils. Budgets almost balance this year but losses to the district council are so significant, and services will be under severe pressure. A decision on Three Rivers is expected on 31 January.

District Cllr Cairney:

- Each MDDC Policy Development Group have an agenda to look at cuts and income in order to balance budgets meaning rates are going up, but quality of services are reducing
- Licensing Committee are undertaking DBS checks on all taxis to ensure compliance.

2301/093 Order of Business

There were no changes to the order of business.

2301/094 Chairman's and Clerk's Announcements

The Town Clerk advised of an expected Devon County Council consultation regarding on street parking charges in the High Street. Other towns are being considered, with relevant town clerks lobbying for further information. This would be an agenda item for the February Planning and Town Strategy Committee meeting.

2301/095 Town Council Minutes

It was **resolved** to approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 22 November 2022 as a correct record. (Proposed by Cllr F Letch).

2301/096 To receive, and to ratify the decisions therein, the minutes of the following meetings (minutes had been issued with the agenda):

- **Climate Emergency Committee held on Thursday 21 July 2022**
It was **resolved** to receive and accept the minutes of the Climate Emergency Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Cochran).
- **Grants Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 06 September 2022**
It was **resolved** to receive and accept the minutes of the Grants Sub-Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Harris).
- **Community and Environment Committee held on Tuesday 25 October 2022**
It was **resolved** to receive and accept the minutes of the Community and Environment Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking).
- **Planning and Town Strategy Committee held on Tuesday 01 November 2022**
It was **resolved** to receive and accept the minutes of the Planning and Town Strategy Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking).
- **Council Affairs and Finance Committee held on Tuesday 08 November 2022**
It was **resolved** to receive and accept the minutes of the Council Affairs and Finance Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Harris).
- **Planning and Town Strategy Committee held on Tuesday 06 December 2022**
It was **resolved** to receive and accept the minutes of the Planning and Town Strategy Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking).
- **Council Affairs and Finance Committee held on Tuesday 13 December 2022**
It was **resolved** to receive and accept the minutes of the Council Affairs and Finance Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Harris).

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Budget 2022/23 (A copy of the budget had been issued with the agenda)

The Town Clerk advised members that there was a typographical error on the agenda relating to the 2022/23 budget rather than 2023/24. Legal advice had been sought of the matter and that whilst it was deemed that the likelihood of a challenge being upheld was unlikely, an additional meeting would be held to ratify the decision made at this meeting. It was noted that the meeting would not be an opportunity to rediscuss the budget in accordance with Standing Order 7.

- **To consider and agree/amend Crediton Town Council's budgets for the financial year 2022/23**

The Town Clerk highlighted the following:

- Informal discussions and convened meetings of the Council Affairs and Finance had taken place to consider the budget and levels of earmarked reserves
- Provision of services (building, toilets, climate emergency, community events, public open space, grants to community groups and organisations, allotments and additional street cleaning/maintenance through contract with Turning Tides, youth work and CCTV)
- Monitoring and amending of ear-marked reserves where possible had been done to reduce the impact of inflationary rises
- Main increase due to previous youth work costs being paid for through reserves, which now is being brought into the annual budget.

Cllr N Letch noted that the precept was higher than expenditure, with the Town Clerk advising that this was to support the increase of earmarked reserves and general reserves where possible due to the spending on youth work.

Cllr Fawssett provided a statement which forms appendix two to the minutes.

Cllr Brookes-Hocking suggested that Cllr Fawssett attend the next meeting of the Planning and Town Strategy Committee to present this suggestion.

Cllr Szabo suggested reductions in some areas, including training and subscriptions but it was accepted that this was not possible.

It was **resolved** that there were no amendments to the budget for the financial year 2023/24 and would remain unchanged. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking).

- **To consider and agree/amend Crediton Town Council's level of reserves for the financial year 2022/23**

Cllr Szabo **proposed** a £36000.00 reduction to earmarked reserves, **seconded** by Cllr Letch. The vote was taken and an insufficient number voting in the affirmative meant the vote was lost and the level of reserves for the financial year 2023/24 would remain unchanged.

- **To consider and agree Crediton Town Council's precept for the financial year 2022/23**

Cllr Cairney asked members to consider what happens when budgets are cut and there are times of austerity; he asked to invest in the future and given the council's lack of physical assets, there was no other way to do this than increase the precept.

Cllr N Letch asked if the council wanted to be a town with no lights, no celebrations, no flowers and expressed concern that this would not be positive for the community.

Cllr Ross stated that whilst the council could cut youth services, she felt it would be better to invest in young people and supports its funding.

Cllr Downes stated that the financing of youth work is a difficult decision, given the town council had not necessarily thought it would be a long-term



commitment at the outset. There has to be consideration given to what a town council should be providing, given how many changes there have been to service provision in recent years.

It was **resolved** to approve a precept of £450000.00 for the financial year 2023/24. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking).

2301/098 To receive the notes of the Joint Planning for Crediton and District Meeting (A copy of the minutes had been issued with the agenda).

The notes were received, and information from MDDC's Director of Place is awaited. It was generally accepted that the town council requires better information regarding S106 funds and it would be necessary to meet with officers to start meaningful conversations about strategic planning for Crediton and district and to enable town and parish council to influence contributions from developments in the early stages.

2301/099 To receive reports from Town Councillors (for information only)

Cllr N Letch highlighted the concerns about new parking enforcement on the High Street, details of which had been highlighted by the Town Clerk during item 2301/094.

2301/100 To note the date of the next meeting – Tuesday 14 March 2022

It was resolved that a meeting to ratify the decision made regarding the precept would be held on Tuesday 31 January 2023 at 18.45. The date of the next usual meeting was noted. The meeting was closed at 20.54.

Signed

A large black rectangular redaction covers the signature of the Chairman. There are some faint blue ink marks around the redaction.

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Chairman

Dated.....

07/02/2023