

# CREDITON TOWN COUNCIL - ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

## FINANCES - FIGURES AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

### Income

#### Income Summary

Precept	450,000
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>450,000</b>

#### Operating Income

Administration	22,635
Council And Councillors	2,556
Exhibition Road Allotments	2,144
Barnfield Allotments	1,775
Moffats Land Allotments	166
Boniface All. Assoc. Member'p	436
War Memorial	150
Stonypark	0
CCTV	0
Wayleave Payments	19
Newcombes Meadow Toilets	0
Christmas Lights	450
Localism Project	7,875
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>488,206</b>

### Expenditure

#### Running Costs

Salaries	193,109
Administration	38,024
Council And Councillors	19,622
Exhibition Road Allotments	1,012
Barnfield Allotments	652
Moffats Land Allotments	113
Boniface All. Assoc. Member'p	273
Peoples Park	5,407
Upper Deck	335
Bandstand	842
War Memorial	176
Street Furniture	1,743
Town Clock	0
Town Council Offices	28,031
Stonypark	400
CCTV	150
Boniface Statue	225
General	3,448
Garage and Storage Rental	3,640
Public Open Spaces	3,350

Newcombes Meadow Toilets	3,336
Old Landscore School	10,515
Tree Works	1,667
Town Maintenance Contract	11,252
Floral Crediton	9,133
Christmas Lights	20,638
Localism Project	9,079
Annual Grant Funding	35,210
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>401,381</b>

### **Did you know?**

The town council's website contains details of all town council finances. You can view the budget for the year, monthly payments and receipts, as well as the council's annual return for 2023-2024. Please visit: [www.crediton.gov.uk/Finances](http://www.crediton.gov.uk/Finances).

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### **CHAIR'S REPORT 2023-24**

Cllr Liz Brookes-Hocking, Chair & Mayor 2022-2024

Our year is starting to develop a regular rhythm of community events alongside the 'business as usual' operations run by our small team of staff. The Food Festival reappeared in June 2023 – held for the first time since 2018 (circumstances and Covid interrupted the continuum). It was hard work for the Food Festival committee to get the event going again but the council was pleased to support with funds, road closures, resources, and event management. It was a very welcome return for this well-supported event.

November's Remembrance Sunday is always a moving occasion, organised jointly with the Royal British Legion. Late November regularly sees the Christmas in Crediton light switch-on – great lights but so much more with the participation of the community in singing, performing and creating the lantern procession around the square (see more on page 5).

We are lucky to live in a community where so many groups contribute to the seasonal celebrations. Just before Christmas the town square was filled with singers, the talented and the not so, but all enthusiastic for Carols in the Square organised by the Rotary with the Town Band – always in fine form.

In January, for the first time, the town council joined with QE and Involve to organise an afternoon at the Leisure Centre showing young people the range of activities in the town. Around 200 students from Years 7 and 8 found out about opportunities varying from scouting/guiding, musical theatre and youth clubs to football rugby and taekwondo – even trying out boxing in a specially constructed ring. Again, we're lucky to have so many adult volunteers who run activities for young people. The event was successful and it's planned to repeat it in the future (see more about youth work on page 6).

In March, we joined with Sustainable Crediton's Climate Action Group to run another Crediton Conversation, this time on Land Use. Around fifty local people discussed the range of uses for land around Crediton – development doesn't just mean housing. We have also commented on the district council's Crediton Masterplan, bringing local knowledge to discussions on the proposals (see more on page 3).

Our public events are all about working in partnership with other groups and organisations in the town. No single agency can achieve everything a town needs so working together is not just better – it's necessary. As Mayor for the last year, I am grateful to all those in Crediton who give freely of their time in so many ways to make our town thrive.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS 2023-24**

### **COUNCIL AFFAIRS & FINANCE**

Cllr Huxtable

The Council Affairs & Finance Committee is responsible for proposing budget requirements for the coming year for Full Council to approve, which covers forward planning and earmarked reserves recommendations. In addition, the committee covers a range of items including the provision of internal control checks and risk assessments, the training of councillors and staff and the revision of policies and procedures of the Council.

There have been several interesting and challenging topics discussed at the committee meetings throughout the year, all of which will make a difference in moving Crediton forward, but not necessarily tomorrow! These topics included:

- Crediton Youth Service
- Sustainable Crediton hub
- Strategic Plan revision
- Events and Projects Officer
- Community Participation Budgeting workshops
- Communications Strategy

There are many moving parts on differing timelines all with the same aim of promoting Crediton and making it a better environment for its residents, businesses and organisations.

### **COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT**

Cllr Cochran

This year the Community & Environment Committee welcomed increased support from local volunteers Sally & Paul Parkhouse, who have taken on the planting of the town's flower towers and planters.

In addition, sponsorship was secured with 4 businesses around the Town Square, in the form of watering the flower towers once/per week. Finally, the Committee made the decision to move away from the usual hanging basket displays and this year focused on perennials and grasses which are pollinator and insect friendly. Not only will these be beneficial for biodiversity, but these plants will only need watering once per week, which will halve the watering costs. Also, with the climate emergency in mind, the total journeys made to Crediton by the contractor will be significantly reduced.

Crediton Urban Taskforce [CUT!] was formed following the activity and expertise of a small group of volunteers. [CUT!] is a volunteer-led initiative, supported by Crediton Town Council. The group aims to tackle the maintenance of our pavements, kerbs, paths and other public areas due to service cuts by Devon County Council and Mid Devon District Council. Further information can be found on our website under the Facilities tab.

The grounds maintenance contract was renewed until March 2026 which includes the maintenance of allotments, Peoples Park, Upper Deck and the Spinning Path Gardens & Fulda Crescent play areas.

## **PLANNING & TOWN STRATEGY**

Cllr Brookes-Hocking

Our Neighbourhood Plan became a legal document in 2022 so even though it's less than two years old, it shouldn't get out of date, which is why we started thinking about the use of potential development land in March 2024. Crediton is very short of amenity space (that's the district council's own assessment) so it may not be such a good idea to eliminate what open space is left inside the town boundary. We know from Covid that easy access to green space is essential to community well-being. Crediton residents put forward numerous ideas about the most sustainable use for the precious undeveloped areas we still have.

Alongside that, we have commented on Mid Devon District Council's Crediton Town Centre Masterplan and joined district councillors and officers to discuss issues included in the proposals. Of course, the amount and speed of traffic in the High Street affects the air quality, footfall, ambience and usability of the High Street as our principal shopping area. If there were an easy solution it would have been dealt with years ago. Changing the nature of the traffic is a significant challenge to which we still don't have an agreed and achievable answer – we're still looking for one, though.

The town is short of large, flexible, indoor spaces suitable for a variety of purposes. People shop differently to the way they did 20-30 years ago. Town centres need to offer facilities that the supermarkets don't and the theory is that leisure activities draw in visitors. That's certainly true of events in the town square and it has become a key facility. In the future we will be thinking about how we can improve on this offer.

The town council has started talking to our surrounding villages because they are affected by development in Crediton – not just what gets built but also what doesn't. We have a Crediton Cluster group which is now meeting regularly to look at common issues and how we may be able to support each other.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE**

Cllr Brookes-Hocking

This committee was formed for the single purpose of producing our Strategic Plan for 2024-2027 which was achieved during the year. The new plan was built on the foundations of the previous plan for 2021-2024 with the same core aims: Responding to development proposals, providing public services, building relationships, promoting economic development & strengthening our community.

We aim to achieve these by an action plan that progresses smoothly onwards from our current objectives. This will include updating the Neighbourhood Plan; creating a 5-year plan for the youth service; improving the CCTV system; transforming Old Landscore School into a community asset; achieving a permanent location for the town council offices. The Strategic Plan 2024-2027 can be found on the Town Council website [www.crediton.gov.uk](http://www.crediton.gov.uk) under the Policies tab in the menu.

## **GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

Cllr Huxtable

The Grants Sub-Committee met in November 2023 and January 2024 to decide on the allocation of grants to local organisations. Also the committee welcomed the opportunity to meet and discuss the grants from organisations to gain a better understanding of their plans and needs.

From a budget perspective the committee carried over £506.48 from the previous year which had not been allocated. A budget of £42,000 was approved by Full Council to cover applications for the 2024-25 funding year. The committee approved twenty seven applications, totalling £38,504. This means that there are still funds available for this year!

The Committee consider all of the applications to ensure that there is appropriate benefit to the local community and would like to encourage additional applications to ensure that the full grants budget is allocated. At the time of writing there is still budget available so please look at the website for more information, application forms and a full list of community grants issued [www.crediton.gov.uk/finance/grants](http://www.crediton.gov.uk/finance/grants). Crediton Town Council has a commitment to encourage, support and promote local community groups and organisations whose activities will contribute to or benefit the town. The deadline to receive grant funding in April 2025 is 30 September 2024. This deadline is to enable the grant applications to be evaluated and for applicants to respond to queries. Should there be budget remaining after the initial reviews this will be shared on the website to enable additional requests to be received and considered.

## **CHRISTMAS IN CREDITON SUB-COMMITTEE**

Cllr Brookes-Hocking

It's ten years since the town council took on responsibility for Christmas lights in the town. For all those ten years, a sub-committee of representatives from local organisations, some key individuals, town councillors and council staff have met several times each year to plan the lighting and the Switch-On event at the end of November when the Christmas tree is lit up in the square along with all the lights throughout the town.

Now, our staff are so familiar with the requirements of the event – including road closures, first aid, marshalls and stewards, food stalls, entertainment, the parade, Father Christmas, gazebos, the lost children point and safeguarding – that we no longer need a committee to organise it. It has become part of business as usual for the staff team and it's more efficient to let them get on with it.

In 2023 school choirs, Morris dancers, adult choirs, musicians and performers entertained the crowds for the afternoon before the parade entered the square in the early evening,

Father Christmas appeared and the lights went on. There's a predictability about Christmas. We all know what the key ingredients are and it will all happen again this year. We do like surprises though, so you can expect us to ring the changes now and then.

### **PARISH PATHS SUB-COMMITTEE**

Cllr Fawssett

In the Spring of 2024, the annual footpath surveys were carried out, with all 32 footpaths walked and any defects reported. It was agreed to carry out works to Footpath 28 near Salmonhutch, following considerable erosion due to wet weather. This was completed in May.

Footpaths have been the main transport routes ever since people started to settle in communities. So for Crediton, that means over 1000 years. Sadly our modern lives, and in particular roads, have cut across these routes. Climate change is also starting to threaten some of our paths, particularly FP28 near Salmonhutch (a popular path included in the Redvers Ramble). DCC has declared a climate emergency, but what we see is Highways surveying land from the old scrap yard to its farms (Lower and Great Parks) with a view to creating a new road. This would be environmental vandalism and damage our ancient paths when we need them most. We can still have sustainable development on this land in keeping with a land use framework approach. This is the last chunk of undeveloped land in Crediton and our last chance to make our town healthy and ready for the future.

### **YOUTH SUB-COMMITTEE**

Cllr Brookes-Hocking

It's only two years since we started to establish our own youth service following the cutting of the county council youth service that ran in Crediton until 2014. We now have staffing at 1.3 FTE with sessional youth workers in addition who plan and lead activities for the youth club. In the autumn, this included making Christmas lanterns and joining in the Switch-on parade. In the warmer weather and lighter evenings, sessions have included outdoor activities using the Forest School facilities at the QE Barnfield site.

Outside of youth club our young people have done graffiti artwork for public spaces and taken part in winter and summer holiday programmes. Our youth workers visit lunchtime sessions at QE and also hold a summer holiday transition programme. This programme introduces year 6 primary school pupils to the secondary school site they will be moving to at the start of the term, helping to grow confidence in those young people during a very big change in their lives.

A significant part of our budget has supported the development of this service. A future plan will involve identifying and investigating routes by which it can become financially more self-sustaining. It's a long process replacing a service that was built over years and cut in a matter of months.

### **COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURE 2024-25**

At our annual meeting held in May 2024, changes were made to the Council's Committee structure. For 2024-25, Council Affairs will now be referred to as Oversight Committee and the Planning & Town Strategy and Community & Environment Committees have merged to become Community Committee. It was also agreed in Feb 2024 to disband the Christmas in Crediton Sub-Committee, with the event being organised by the Projects & Events Officer, reporting back to Community Committee when required. The terms of reference for each

committee and sub-committee can be found on our website at [www.crediton.gov.uk/your-council/meetings](http://www.crediton.gov.uk/your-council/meetings).

## **WHO DOES WHAT?**

Crediton Town Council has an overall responsibility for the wellbeing of Crediton residents and protecting their quality of life, environment and economic wellbeing. The way we live, work and enjoy time in Crediton is supported by three council bodies:

### **CREDITON TOWN COUNCIL**

- Maintain open spaces
- Maintain town council assets (War Memorial, Boniface Statue, bandstand, noticeboards etc.)
- Hedge and grass cutting on town council land and other agreed areas
- Allotments for residents
- Public conveniences (Newcombes meadow toilets)
- Partnership working with groups and charities
- Community grants Community projects
- Town events (e.g. Christmas in Crediton)
- Making observations to planning authorities
- Campaigning for the wellbeing of residents
- Working to make Crediton more sustainable
- Youth work
- Representing residents on local issues Maintaining public footpaths in Crediton (in partnership with DCC)
- CCTV

### **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

- Rubbish, recycling, garden waste, food waste collections
- Maintain play areas and equipment
- Council tax and business rates
- Housing
- Planning applications and building control
- Dog controls including dog mess
- Off-street parking (pay & display car parks in Crediton)
- Environmental health Leisure Centres (Lords Meadow in Crediton)
- Public conveniences (Market St toilets)
- Economic development
- Licensing
- Electoral registration and voting.

### **DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL**

- Education, school admissions, early years and education/health care plans
- Roads, transport, potholes, public rights of way, cycling routes, street lighting, onstreet parking, traffic management and reporting any related problems
- Fire and public safety
- Social care, blue badges, health care
- Libraries
- Recycling centres, fly tipping and graffiti

- Celebratory events, birth and death registrations
- Business support
- Child protection and adoption
- Trading Standards
- Concessionary bus passes

## CONTACT DETAILS

### Crediton Town Councillors - Boniface Ward

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John Downes	<a href="mailto:jdownes@crediton.gov.uk">jdownes@crediton.gov.uk</a>	01363 774267
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### Crediton Town Councillors - Lawrence Ward

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Georgina Stone	<a href="mailto:gstone@crediton.gov.uk">gstone@crediton.gov.uk</a>	07821 945167

Rachel Avery (Town Clerk) E-mail: [reception@crediton.gov.uk](mailto:reception@crediton.gov.uk) Tel: 01363 773717

Council Offices, The Bungalow, 8 North Street, Crediton, EX17 2BT

### District & County Councillors

John Downes (District)	01363 774267
Jim Cairney (District)	01363 773490
Frank Letch (District & County)	01363 775739
Guy Cochran (District)	07891 898487

### Useful Contacts

Mid Devon District Council	01884 255255	<a href="http://www.middevon.gov.uk">www.middevon.gov.uk</a>
Devon County Council Crediton	0845 155 1015	<a href="http://www.devon.gov.uk">www.devon.gov.uk</a>
Library	01363 772578	

More on our website: [www.crediton.gov.uk/useful-contacts](http://www.crediton.gov.uk/useful-contacts)