

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF the 231st MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER
ON THURSDAY 20 DECEMBER 2007 AT 8.00pm

Present: Cllr Norman in the Chair David Allison - Clerk

Cllrs Bains, Bennett, Birch, Brading, Brand, Jefford, Seeley, Vassiliou and Wynne-Jones

Voting Members 10 – Cllr Bennett arrived at 8.12pm

There were no members of the public present

CC480/07 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Dann, Hollands, Martin, Saxon and Seabourne

CC481/07 Declarations of Interest by Members

No declarations of interest were received.

CC482/07 Representations from the Public

There were no representations from members of the public.

CC483/07 Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr Wynne-Jones and seconded by Cllr Seeley that the minutes of the 230th Monthly Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 29 November 2007 be accepted. The proposal was agreed and the Chairman signed the minutes.

CC484/07 Matters Arising

An update of item CC454/07 (Representations from the Public) was sought. This item concerned the cutting of a hedge of a house on the corner of Barton Way and New Road by the Parish Council. The Clerk advised that a letter had been sent to the complainant and a copy circulated to all Councillors. Members discussed this matter with criticism being made that the delay in replying was too long. The Clerk explained that no information could be found in the office concerning this matter which in itself took time to look so the Clerk had taken the matter up directly with the owner of the property. The Clerk added that he had considered it unreasonable to put time constraint on the resident. The Clerk continued that as the information had been received from the resident, he had no reason to believe that the facts were anything different to that stated in the letter. The Clerk concluded that should such a situation arise in the future then no action will be taken without some documentation from Highways authorising the works.

An update on CC461/07 (Replacement Office Fencing) was requested. The Clerk stated that the cheaper of the quotes received would be accepted and the order placed in the New Year.

An update on CC471.2/07 (Environment & Amenity report, Matters Arising, Insurance Liability) was requested. The Clerk advised that a response had not yet been received from the Council's insurance company.

CC485/07 Committee Reports

CC485.1/07 Environment and Amenity Committee held on Tuesday 4 December 2007

It was proposed by Cllr Seeley and seconded by Cllr Shafe that the minutes of the Environment and Amenity Committee held on Tuesday 4 December 2007 be adopted. The proposal was agreed.

CC485.2/07 Any matters arising

Under item EA410/07 (Garden Competition Presentation), a Member raised the point of running the Garden Competition given the small number of residents who actually take part. The Chairman said that this would be a matter for the Environment & Amenity Committee to consider at their next meeting in firming up on their budget proposals for next year.

CC485.3/07 Planning and Development Committee held on Wednesday 5 December and Wednesday 19 December 2007

The Chairman pointed out that this Council meeting was being held a week earlier than usual and although the Clerk had prepared the Minutes of the Planning & Development meeting held on the 19 December, they had not been distributed to Members.

It was proposed by Cllr Wynne-Jones and seconded by Cllr Bennett that the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee held on Wednesday 5 December 2007 be adopted. The proposal was agreed.

CC485.4/07 Any matters arising

An update on item PD721/07 (Cycling on Pavements) was requested. The Clerk advised that he could not recall off hand the status of the matter but would check and progress at the earliest opportunity.

CC485.5/07 Finance and Administration Committee held on Thursday 11 October 2007

The Chairman reminded Members that this Council meeting was being held a week earlier than usual and although the Clerk had prepared the Minutes of the Finance & Administration meeting held on the 13 December, they had not been distributed to Members.

CC486/07 Budget 2008/09

The Chairman introduced this item and asked the Clerk to elaborate. The Clerk advised that Members had already been distributed with a consolidated draft budget for 2008/09, version 4 dated 11 December 2007. The Clerk added that an updated version was being made available at this meeting, dated 18 December, which updated expenditure figures to 18 December 2007. The Clerk added that some small adjustments had also been made to the budget resulting in a draft precept of £266,082. The Clerk emphasised that this was a draft budget and Members would be considering their Committee proposals in more depth in the January round of meetings.

A lively debate took place concerning the priorities for the Parish Council and the contribution it can make to the community as a whole when setting the budget. It was pointed out that the practice of using funding from General Reserves to assist in buffering projects or expenditure levels does mean that in alternate years, the full costs would have to be borne and this would have a direct impact on the precept.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by requesting that each of the Council's Committees in the January round of meetings would need to carefully scrutinise and prioritise the budget proposals being put forward.

CC487/07 &
CC488/07

Correspondence

The Chairman introduced this item and pointed out that the Agenda item CC488/07 could be taken together, if Members considered this appropriate. It was agreed to take both items together.

The Clerk referred to the supplement of relevant correspondence and briefly elaborated on one or two items.

A discussion then took place regarding the letter that had been published in the Council's Parish Pump magazine and the request by certain Members for the name and address of the writer to be disclosed. The Clerk pointed out that there were extremely important points of principle that needed to be established in dealing with confidentiality of those people wishing to remain anonymous when submitting letters or material for publication. The Clerk added that only one Council Member had asked the right question which was to see the letter with the name and the address removed and accordingly that Member had been given a copy. The Clerk added that in this particular case, the letter received from the resident had in fact been personally handed to him and the letter had not included the writers name nor address. The Clerk added that the points of principle regarding confidentiality had to be established given that there were other letters where the writer had wished to remain anonymous.

The Clerk concluded that all correspondence is available for inspection by Councillors in the Parish Office given advance notice and that Councillors must respect the confidentiality that existed in exercising this right. It was pointed out, however, that there may be some matters which may indeed be confidential to the Clerk whilst undertaking his duties.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by pointing out that the Editorial Committee for the Council's magazine had already met for the Spring/Summer edition and would be taking a more pro-active role in determining its content, rather than reacting to articles/letters submitted.

CC489/07

Closure

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.35pm.