



Meeting of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on  
Monday 26 September 2022 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Rosalyn Day (RD), Lynda Roller (LR), Geoff Thomas (GT) and John Goddard (JG)

Parish Councillors absent: Cllrs Sonia Plato (SP) and Jill Mitcheson (JM)

District/County Councillors present: Cllr Gary Curtis

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk and 3 members of the public

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1. There were no questions from the public.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Plato and Mitcheson.

**3. Declaration of Interests**

Received from:

Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee

Cllr Roller – Member of the Environmental Society

**4. Adoption of Minutes**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the parish council held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022 as a true and correct record

**5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting**

5.1 Walkabout with John O’Conner – the Clerk reported that Jason from John O’Conner had met with Cllrs Day & Plato and the clerk to walk through the contract regarding verges and the Recreation Ground. He confirmed that a team who are not normally allocated the Crowhurst area had been called in recently and hence a few areas were not dealt with as they should be. However, he was reassuring that the usual operatives would be back at work, and confirmed arrangements to respect the wildflower areas, and allow a margin around newly planted hedge plants and trees. Some specific items such as cutting around a water drain cover, and righting and re-positioning a grit bin at the bottom of Sandrock Hill were agreed upon. He was also asked to cut the hedges both sides of the entrance to the Rec Ground car park to improve visibility. This will be an additional cost, and the clerk was asked to confirm the price.

5.2 Bench Policy & new Horticultural Society Bench - Cllr Thomas had been asked to draft a bench policy for future reference and this had been circulated previously to all members. A couple of editions regarding the length of time a bench must be maintained were proposed and RD thanked him for his work. With the editions, the policy was approved and adopted. The clerk was asked to amend the policy as proposed.

The location for the re-positioning of the horticultural society bench had been agreed as roughly mid-way up Station Road where there is an area of flat ground. THE area will need to be strimmed and then concrete pads/bases for the 4 feet is required. Will Kemp (WK) offered to prepare the area. JG suggested it then be bolted in place, and also suggested the Horticultural Society may want to secure the new bench in position.

5.3 A new ladies loo seat has been installed in the Pavilion by Cllr Goddard. RD thanked him.

5.4 Handyman Recruitment - Cllr Goddard reported that Cllr Mitcheson had contacted a handyman from the Eastbourne area on a recommendation, and he was prepared to come for a couple of days once a list of jobs had been finalized. The clerk was asked to circulate a list to all members for them to include jobs that they were aware of, and then contact the handyman. Depending on the nature of the work involved, the work may need to go out to tender.

5.5 De-fibrillators – the clerk was asked to purchase the paediatric pads required for the de-fib in the phone box. JG pointed out that the door hinges and door itself needed attention. RD asked if a 3<sup>rd</sup> de-fib should be purchased to replace the one that has been removed from outside the VH. After a brief discussion, the consensus was to purchase a replacement, and the clerk was asked to try and obtain a grant from Rother DC, Community Heartbeat or a similar organization. Furthermore, the clerk was asked to write to the PCC before their October meeting requesting a donation as the de-fib would be conveniently located for the church.

## **6. Representations from District & County Councillors**

Cllr Curtis reported that he had added his support to the grant application for the Community Map at the station, and it appeared to be going through. The motion to rescind the decision granting permission for RR/2022/840/P – Beech Farm, Sedlescombe, was not passed. However, a stay notice has been received from the Secretary of State, so the application is being reviewed. The Galley Hill sewage leak is an item on the agenda for the Cabinet meeting next Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

Cllr Field was absent.

## **7. Financial Matters**

- 7.1 The financial report to 31<sup>st</sup> August had been previously circulated and was approved by members.
- 7.2 The payments report for August & September was considered. Most payments had been made by the previous clerk as the Co-op bank has a backlog in setting up the new clerk as an authorised user.
- 7.3 The bank reconciliation for July and August 2022 had been circulated and was approved by members and duly signed by the Chairman.
- 7.4 A grant application had previously been made by the Environmental Society. Will Kemp and Frances Royston then spoke to explain further what the grant would be used for, mainly insurance and additional equipment for volunteers. RD asked a couple of questions about where the equipment would be kept and then proposed approving the grant application. Cllr Roller had declared an interest, but GT and JG approved the motion, and the Clerk was asked to arrange payment as soon as possible. RD thanked the environment group for all the work they do around the village.

*The Chairman used Standing Order 10 a (vi) to change the order of business, and Item 9 was brought forward and considered as the next item.*

## 8. Planning Matters

### 8.1 New planning applications

#### 8.1.1 RR/2022/2059/P – St Benedict's Byre, Catsfield Road, Crowhurst TN33 9BU

*Proposal: Proposed detached building to be used as ancillary overspill/annexe accommodation for members of the applicant's family (alternative to garage building approved under extant planning permission RR/2022/1236/P)*

The applicant spoke to provide a brief history and explanation behind the new planning application that is now required. The footprint, roof height and outside appearance will remain the same, still using materials in keeping with the surrounding area. After lengthy discussions and further questions being asked, the council approved the following comments for submission online:

*Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application, despite concerns, acknowledging the need for the current owners' unique circumstances. If Rother DC are minded to grant permission, we would request that the following conditions are included:*

1. *No or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32.(v) of the Crowhurst Design Guide.*
2. *Any new hard-standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Design Guide).*
3. *Materials used to be in keeping with the local area as per the High Weald Design Guide.*
4. *The new building can never be sold under separate title.*
5. *Installation of bird and bat boxes where possible as mentioned in policy CE3.2 (vi) of the Crowhurst Design Guide.*

The Chairman thanked the applicant for attending the meeting.

#### 8.1.2 RR/2022/2058/P – The Farmhouse, Lower Mill Farm, Watermill Lane, Crowhurst TN39 5JB

*Proposal: Conversion of an agricultural and commercial storage building to create a detached dwelling with car parking provision – re-submission of RR/2021/2074/P*

GT had been asked to report on this application. He said that it was controversial as the new application hadn't changed in much detail from the prior application. The area in question with the derelict building is unsightly and neighbours are divided in their opinions about better alternatives. The main concern is the proximity to ancient woodland and the unsustainable location. After further discussion the following comments were approved for submission online:

*Crowhurst Parish Council does not object to this application in principle but would like to see the following conditions imposed:*

1. *Protection of the near-by ancient woodland.*
2. *No or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32.(v) of the Crowhurst Design Guide.*
3. *Any new hard-standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Design Guide).*
4. *Installation of bird and bat boxes where possible as mentioned in policy CE3.2 (vi) of the Crowhurst Design Guide.*

### 8.2 Review of planning procedures

RD asked if the recent planning training had covered the issue of how parish councils should interact with applicants. Unfortunately, it was not mentioned, but JG and LR both said it had been useful, if rather generalised. RD said the current planning procedure involves councillors making

an unannounced visit to the applicant, and if they are absent, a note is put through the door with contact details. However, she proposed including further details to include the date of the next parish council meeting when the planning application would be discussed and inviting the applicant to make contact beforehand or attend the meeting in person. The other councillors present concurred that human contact is important on planning issues particularly in a small village, even though visits are not strictly required and not all Parish Councils make them, and they all felt that this clarification would be helpful. RD offered to circulate the revised note for future use. GT said that it was a shame contact details cannot be provided by Rother's planning department, but it was assumed this was due to GDPR legislation. The Clerk was asked to verify with Rother if this is the case and furthermore to check with other clerks on how their councillors approach planning applications.

## **9. Recreation Ground**

- 9.1 The Monthly Update – this had been carried out by JG and would be passed to Cllr Sonia Plato for the next inspection. JG confirmed that most outstanding items had been resolved. However, he noticed the recent seeding of the area of ground between the newly installed bollard lights and pointed out that the ground needed levelling first as had been agreed with the contractor. The clerk also reported that one of the bollard lights was not working and was asked to get in touch with Tony Barham and mention both matters.

Tidying of the garage was still a work in progress as JG had not overlapped with the football club and others. He also needed to liaise with SP about the location for grass cuttings to stop them being dumped in the newly renovated area used by the youth club. He was also hoping to attend to the footpath raising by the gate to the containers and re-dressing the path.

- 9.2 The Clerk had previously circulated a 'wish-list' of items/improvements for the Rec, the playground and the Pavilion that had been suggested by residents at the Annual Meeting in May. RD suggested this form the basis of a consultation for further suggestions and GT offered to take the lead on creating this.

The Rec User Group meeting had taken place in August and RD reported that it had been well-received especially as one hadn't taken place for some time. It was useful to get everyone together and discuss some common issues such as storage, changing room facilities and other requirements that would be mutually beneficial. SP was due to speak to the Environment Agency about allowing the football club to cut a strip near the river to retrieve lost balls. Will Kemp said the Environment Group were planning to put up a low-level chicken wire fence to protect the newly planted hedging, but allow for the plastic guards to be removed, and this may help retain balls that were rolling along the ground at least. It was suggested that this needed to be approved by the Council to ensure it met Health and Safety for rec users.

Other issues include levelling the ground between the lights, an area to deposit grass cuttings and the state of the pavilion floor. The next meeting of the Rec User Group will take place on 7<sup>th</sup> November and GT said he would like to attend.

- 9.3 RD reported that the annual playground inspection had been acceptable and only really highlighted issues that the council were already aware of, such as thin areas of woodchips, rotten wood and peeling paint on the toddler slide. The clerk was asked to order 1 pallet of woodchips for delivery as soon as possible.

## **10. Councillor Updates on External Bodies**

- 10.1 Village Hall Management Committee – GT reported that most maintenance issues including the outside light had been repaired, and that bookings were picking up. They are applying to Rother DC's £500k grant fund to help Village Halls improve their environmental standing. If successful, an energy audit would be carried out to look at the best ways to reduce energy consumption, but it may also be possible to put in double glazing.

- 10.2 Policing Meeting – LR had attended the Teams meeting with the PCSO’s on 14<sup>th</sup> September. A significant increase in scam calls was reported, but no crime in Crowhurst. LR mentioned that a car had been burnt out in the rec ground car park and a fence destroyed by a car. The police explained that a new computer system is being introduced which will provide improved detail in the future but is currently causing a lag between crimes actually happening and being reported. Furthermore, it was confirmed that abuse of speedwatch officials when reported is followed up and sanctions imposed. The clerk then confirmed the patrol meeting with the police will take place on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October at 11am, and confirmed the meeting place as the Rec Ground car park.
- 10.3 Combe Valley Countryside Park – GT had nothing significant to report.
- 10.4 Community Information Map & South-East Communities Rail Partnership – no report in Cllr Plato’s absence.

**11. Clerk’s Report**

The Clerk reported on the recent ESALC Newsletter and Forum which had focused on Emergency & Resilience Plans. Crowhurst needs to produce/finalise one and the clerk offered to circulate an outline for councillors to amend and add to where possible.

GT reminded the clerk of the broken grit bin in Station Road which needed replacing by Network Rail. RD offered to provide the contact details for the relevant person.

Finally, there had been a request for details of any potential recipients of funds from the Rother Rural Trust. The clerk was asked to publicise details.

**12. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items**

GT suggested ‘Warm Spaces’, the Rother initiative to fund community venues for those who can’t afford to heat their own homes.

**13. Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.39pm

Signed by

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Date: