



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

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Rosalyn Day (RD), Lynda Roller (LR), Sonia Plato (SP), Geoff Thomas (GT), Jill Mitcheson (JM) and John Goddard (JG)

District/County Councillors present: Cllr Gary Curtis, RDC and Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk and 2 members of the public

1. Public Questions

Will Kemp from the Crowhurst Environment Group informed the council that the 2 ponds near the glamping site are now stocked with carp. This is detrimental to other wildlife in the ponds and the connected waterways. RD asked if he'd raised it with the Environment Agency and offered to have a chat with the landowner. SP also reported that grass cuttings had been dumped into the stream. This is environmentally damaging and can block the stream and lead to flooding issues. She said that the EA can only investigate an issue after it's been reported. She suggested that the council report it as a matter of concern. JG asked about the EA's policy regarding waterway pollution. SP said that there is a national management plan for streams and there should be a 3m verge between the field and the stream. WK had sent photos to Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC so they are aware. SP proposed that the PC raise a concern on the EA website, and this was unanimously supported. The clerk was asked to report the matter.

2. Apologies for absence

None were received.

3. Declaration of Interests

Received from:

Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee

Cllr Roller – Member of the Crowhurst Environment Group

Cllr Plato – Youth Club & Crowhurst Environment Group

4. Adoption of Minutes

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the parish council held on 26th September 2022 as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

- 5.1 The clerk had obtained a quote from John O'Conner for hedge-cutting at the rec car park entrance of £130 + VAT. This was deemed acceptable, and she was asked to confirm the work. She further reported that following complaints from the football club about cuttings left on the pitch and no markings being made before a match, the matter had been reported to John

O’Conner’s and they had cut, cleared and marked the pitch before the following game. No further complaints had been received.

- 5.2 Horticultural Bench – the clerk reported that the Horticultural Society had been informed that the agreed area in Station Road had kindly been prepared by Will Kemp and they could now move the old bench there. Concrete footings will then be arranged. RD thanked Will Kemp.
- 5.3 Bench Policy – the final amendments had been included to the Bench Policy, and RD had noted that there should also be a paragraph about approved construction. The clerk will include that and then publish the policy on the website. GT also suggested that council policies should be reviewed on a regular basis. RD agreed hence a review of the Grievance Policy as a later agenda item. A review of the Bench Policy in 5 years was agreed and the clerk was asked to include this detail.
- 5.4 The Environment Group had discussed the chicken wire fencing they plan to install once the tree protection is removed from the newly planted hedgerow. The RSPB are providing chestnut poles and together they are inspecting on Thursday morning to finalise the plan. JG suggested it should be at least 1m high and GT said there should be no sharp edges. They will re-present the plan to council for approval at the next meeting.
- 5.5 Handyman Recruitment - Cllr Mitcheson gave the clerk the contact details. The list of jobs has been finalised and approved, although RD said that there are now holes in the Pavilion floor by the showers too. The clerk will contact the handyman.
- 5.6 De-fibrillators – the clerk has approached the PCC about a contribution to the purchase of the new de-fibrillator. GT insisted that pediatric pads are purchased for the existing de-fib in the phone box so that all of the de-fibs are suitable for adults and children. The clerk was asked to confirm a price.
- 5.7 Woodchips for the playground had been ordered and would be delivered on Wednesday. Councillors offered to meet and spread them around the area as necessary.
- 5.8 Grit Bin replacement – the clerk had spoken to Network Rail about replacing the broken grit bin in Station Road. A replacement should be there in the next two weeks. GT pointed out that there were two bins, both damaged, and the clerk said she would add to the request.

6. Representations from District & County Councillors

Cllr Curtis reported that the issue of rats was now being dealt with by Rother’s Environmental Health team. Contractors were aware of the problem but had been slow to report it. It is a difficult problem to deal with as poison can’t be used in public spaces. An article in the Sussex Express provides further details - see <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/bexhill-seafront-rats-we-are-scared-they-will-come-across-the-road-to-our-building-3858226>

GT had sent an email asking about Rother’s ‘Warm Spaces’ policy and GC was waiting for an update. Planning – the motion to delegate all planning approvals to officers was defeated. The rebuilding of Bexhill’s Town Hall was discussed at length. Planning permission has been refused but will be appealed. The costs have been controversial with an estimate of £4m for concrete alone.

The details of the plans for the Normanhurst Estate would be presented to councillors on 27th October and then goes live on the Greystoke website and there is a public presentation on 31st October which has been widely publicised. SP expressed concern about the number of trees being cut down despite a blanket TPO. GC said that there had been some clearance work by the shoot and the Angling Association had cut a lot of trees down around Broomham pond as they were unaware of the

TPO. Rother don't currently deem it enforceable, but on the Normanhurst Estate itself, he was not aware of any trees being felled. SP said that John Feltwell, Tree Warden thinks trees have been cut down and GC suggested he get in touch. There has been a great deal of rumour about the plans, and he felt that it will be constructive to have the facts in 2 weeks' time.

Cllr Field reported that one of the two fire engines is being taken away from Battle Fire Station because figures are low. This is disappointing as it is not just the number of incidents, but the area and distance that must be covered. Furthermore, there was no consultation, but unfortunately the Fire Authority has even less money than before.

She also reported that ESCC were hoping to advertise libraries as 'Warm Spaces' and as a place where people could work and avoid increased energy costs at home. There had been complaints from café owners about customers who stay for hours but only buy one coffee so hopefully this initiative will resolve the issue.

7. Financial Matters

- 7.1 The financial report to 30th September had been previously circulated and was approved by members.
- 7.2 The payments report for October was considered. The clerk was still waiting for approval as a new user for online banking, so no payments had been made. SP had not used her security token before, but the clerk offered to guide her in the process and then the payments could be set up and the Chairman authorise them in the usual way.
- 7.3 The bank reconciliation for October 2022 had been circulated. The clerk detailed the credits on the account, and it was approved by members and signed by the Chairman.

8. Recreation Ground

8.1 The Monthly Update – SP had carried out the monthly inspection and reported that the de-fib torch battery apparently required regular winding up. RD asked that all members wind the battery up when they make their inspection, and also asked Nicola Stell to wind it up when she made her checks. SP said that there were no new matters to report that hadn't been mentioned previously, and they are mostly the tasks for the handyman's list. She noticed a leak in the downpipe on the Pavilion by the outdoor tap. She also asked about matting for the floor where the footballers walk in with their studded boots. There was a brief discussion about the best material for matting, but it was deferred to the Rec User Group Meeting. RD reminded JG about raising the path across the container area and he said he will action that. RD also suggested a sign that read "Car park is for users of Rec Ground only" but members thought that it would probably be ignored. However, a sign disclaiming any responsibility for cars parked may be useful. The clerk was asked to investigate signage.

8.2 Rec User Group meeting - The next meeting will take place on Monday 7th November at 7pm in the meeting room of St George's Church. SP asked if the clerk could contact the EA about the football team's request to cut a path next to the river to retrieve lost footballs and provided the contact details.

Tidying of the garage was still a work in progress as JG had not been able to arrange meeting someone who held a key. The clerk was asked to find out the contact details of the football club's groundsman who had recently collected a key and pass them on to JG.

N.B The clerk later confirmed that the Football Club had sent an email during the meeting to confirm that the Maintenance Shed has now been cleared and all rubbish is due to be taken away later in the week.

8.3 Actions for the Recreation Ground will be confirmed at the Rec User Group meeting.

9. Emergency & Resilience Planning

The clerk had circulated an email from RALC and another council's plan as a starting point for Crowhurst's Emergency Plan and asked for any comments. RD said that the Wardens' details were confirmed last year, but people with chain saws and 4-wheel drives etc. was required. It was suggested that a couple of councillors should take the lead and GT & RD offered to collate local details and provide feedback.

10. Planning Matters

10.1 New planning applications

10.1.1 RR/2022/2370/P – The Coach House, Royal Oak Lane, Crowhurst

LR had been to visit the applicant who had explained that he had looked at various alternatives and felt that the proposal detailed was the best option in the circumstances where a new sewage treatment plant system was required. There was some discussion amongst members about why he couldn't connect to the mains drainage via a neighbouring property, but in conclusion, RD proposed that there was no objection to the proposal. If a property can join the mains, surely it is obliged to do so. All agreed and the clerk was asked to submit the following comments online:

Crowhurst Parish Council does not object to this application.

10.2 High Weald AONB's dark skies policy. RD asked the district & county councillors if they knew of a way to enforce the dark skies policy. Cllr Field said Enforcement would only get involved if planning conditions were breached. She suggested asking a Rother planning councillor directly at the Annual Parish Conference taking place on Wednesday. SP reported that 5 parishes including Crowhurst are taking part in the Dark Skies' Festival planned for a week in February 2023. Sussex Lund may grant funding for dark skies events such as walks etc. to raise awareness as education and information is the main aim. RD suggested an article in the Crowhurst News about preventative measures and GT said that the council should ensure the dark skies policy was included every time planning comments are submitted (and also about water run-off).

11. 20's Plenty

LR had circulated the presentation about this campaign as the ambition is to get every parish involved. The next steps are advertising the campaign, signing petitions and canvassing MP's. There is a further meeting in Oxford about the national speed limit. GT remarked that Hastings Borough Council have passed a motion to enforce 20mph throughout the town and are requesting that the county council impose it. Can Rother do the same? GC said that East Sussex maintains the policies and currently won't entertain it. RD was happy to propose that the council gets involved and suggested adding it to the SLR meeting agenda. GC said that Ashburnham are doing the same thing and the clerk was asked to make contact and enquire about their campaign. LR suggested calling a village meeting and getting a speaker from the "20's Plenty" group. GC said that education and awareness is the best method and KF said that using accident statistics is powerful. LR will get in touch with a resident who had previously pursued the campaign. GC said that Catsfield has a black cat machine which can be hired and GT suggested a speed survey could be carried out before and after temporary signs are put up to measure their effectiveness.

12. Councillor Updates on External Bodies

12.1 Village Hall Management Committee – GT nothing to report.

- 12.2 Policing Meeting – the October police meeting had been postponed to November. RD reminded councillor's about the following day's meeting with the police about the patrol plan. Matters to be raised include anti-social behaviour, dangerous speeding incidents and communication between Hastings/Eastbourne police and PCSO's.
- 12.3 RALC meeting – RD had attended this the previous week and Emergency Plans had been a hot topic. The water companies are meant to be contacting clerks to ascertain the best place to leave water for residents in the event of a shortage. There was a lot of information about the "Warm Spaces" initiative. LR had been to Fairlight for the opening day of their hub and was really impressed. Significant funding had been secured from local commerce and the atmosphere was very inclusive with everyone helping as well as benefitting. It was a social environment and seemed to be working very well and they even planned to open on Christmas Day. But they had been well set up for it with a well-appointed village hall and an existing group serving lunches. The warmer spaces initiative will serve tea & coffee on a Monday & Wednesday. GT commended the initiative and said it should happen all year round to aid with isolation etc. and not just for a warm space in the winter. RD said that Fairlight was the furthest advanced, but other PC's were also looking at similar schemes. SP said that the new owners of the pub are keen to get involved in the community and she may suggest that they consider catering for residents on Xmas Day. Also, the Christian Healing Centre is mostly available as a meeting place and has a nice café.
- 12.4 Combe Valley – GT said that the board meeting is the following week and he would report back thereafter. SP reminded members that together with the High Weald AONB, the Environment Group would be clearing the footpath alongside Forewood Lane between the Millennium Garden and Old Post Office. They will inform Highways as signage and appropriate safety measures will be in place, but a date has not yet been confirmed.

13. Clerk's Report

- The clerk had attended a (virtual) Highways Overview on 12th October and reported that issues raised included quality of repairs carried out, reporting procedure and budgets.
- The SLR Meeting has now been arranged for 21st November at 2pm – the clerk requested agenda items.
- The parish council was not in a position to request CIL Funding for the playground refurbishment in the current round, but the clerk will clarify when the next round is due to take place.
- There were no items of correspondence.

14. Review of Council Policy

RD had proposed reviewing policies on a regular basis, beginning with the Grievance Policy. Having looked at others, she proposed the following additions: going to another councillor if the grievance is about the chair and that the complainant should go to the chair if the grievance was with the clerk. Also, to stipulate that all matters would be treated confidentially and in line with GDPR policy. Finally, if there is an appeal, that decision is final. All members agreed with the proposed changes and the clerk was asked to amend the policy and circulate it for final approval. It would be reviewed in 5 years.

15. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

RD said that an informal meeting of the Design Guide group of the Neighbourhood Plan had taken place as they hadn't met for a while. The Design Guide needs to be incorporated into the NP, and policies reviewed. She said they were hoping to strengthen some of the environmental policies. SP suggested making the presentation again as it was more interesting than just reading it. Current youth club members and school children remember being asked for their ideas previously. She urged members to examine it and asked the Chairman to circulate it by email.

16. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Monday 21st November at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.29pm

Signed by

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Date: