



Minutes of the Additional Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 20th February 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Ros Day (RD), Sonia Plato (SP), Geoff Thomas (GT), Lynda Roller (LR) and John Goddard (JG).

In attendance: 4 members of the public and Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk

1. Public Questions

A representative from the Northern Parishes Group, a group of parish councils & other interested parties primarily interested in enforcement, came to speak about the protection of Dark Skies, in relation to train stations. Certain types of light are very offensive to wildlife especially high, unshielded lights. Etchingham station is the worst offender with a LUX reading of 4142 when the requirement is only 10. Crowhurst car park is also very bright. The group gains weight by acting collectively and have made submissions to the southern region of Network Rail and are lobbying Huw Merriman, MP, the local MP and Rail Minister. The Chairman thanked him for the information and Cllr Plato commended the thorough report written by the group. She went on to say that the popularity of the various events held as part of the recent Dark Skies Festival reflect the public interest in the fight against light pollution (see item 9 for further details).

Nick Stell enquired about the bench that was moved to Station Road and is now back in front of the VH. GT said that he had been contacted about ownership of the bench as there seems to be some confusion. The clerk was asked to investigate and report back at the March meeting.

Nick Stell also asked about the verge going up Sandrock Hill where residents still park and some timber posts have been installed. The clerk said that a feasibility study was currently being carried out by East Sussex Highways, and that a licence would be required to plant bollards on the highway. The clerk will investigate and report back.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Jill Mitcheson.

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 16th January 2023, correcting the date by hand, as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

- 5.1 Grit Bins – Station Road bins have now been filled, and Highways have righted and filled the grit bin at the bottom of Ballards Hill.
- 5.2 Leak in the pavilion – Luigi Romano carried out repairs on 25th & 26th Jan. The ground needs to be drier to connect the outside tap, but otherwise everything is working normally again.
- 5.3 30mph signs - Highways confirmed that repeater signs on Chapel Hill, 50m north of the pub have now been replaced.
- 5.4 Clock at the Pavilion – The handyman has contacted the manufacturer to request reset instructions. The clerk will also ask him to quote for repairs to the roof of the clock tower.
- 5.5 De-fib – This was installed on 11th February at the VH.
- 5.6 Community Map – the clerk reported that the grant application to Rother DC had been successful and £1000 would be made available to the Community Rail Partnership.
- 5.7 Horticultural bench – this had been moved to Station Road, and then moved back to the VH. See earlier comments in Public Questions. The clerk will investigate.
- 5.8 Queen’s Green Canopy - Orchard now included on digital map of QGC project.

6. Representations from District & County Councillors

In the absence of district and county councillors, no reports were available from East Sussex or Rother.

7. Financial Matters

- 7.1 The financial report to 31st January had been previously circulated and was approved by members.
- 7.2 The payments report for February was considered and approved.
- 7.3 The bank reconciliation to 31st January 2023 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chairman.
- 7.4 The clerk confirmed the costs for a new auditor Mulberry & Co. Members agreed to engage them for a year and then review.

8. Recreation Ground

- 8.1 RD had carried out the monthly inspection and the only problem was the 3rd light in from the Pavilion had been broken, potentially vandalised again. She also suggested asking Tony Barham to have a look at lighting from the Youth Hut in respect of dark skies – there is a floodlight that could be angled down and is probably no longer required now that the bollard lights have been installed. SP & JG offered to have a look when it’s dark one evening.
Following the comments made at the Rec User Group meeting about the state of the path, SP said that some repair work has been carried out recently by volunteers but feels that some hardwood edging is required. It has dried out significantly. The clerk is waiting for quotes to hire temporary pathways to use until later in the year when more permanent repairs can be made. Nicola Stell is organising a meeting with the owner of the pond to see if preventative action can be taken. The chair then suggested delegating authority to the Clerk to spend up to £1000 on temporary pathways and revisiting the matter at the next meeting.

8.2 The clerk provided an update from the handyman: a key for the barrier & a new break glass holder has been fitted, paper towel dispensers and waste paper bins are in place in the toilets and the clerk needs to source playground parts for the next tasks on his list. He will be reverting to one day a month.

The stoolball club had offered to source the materials for the bench repair, and the clerk will get a price to supply materials.

From 3 quotes, the cheapest price for the under bench storage was chosen, but the clerk was asked to verify that it will be made of robust enough material.

8.3 The main issue from the recent Rec User Group meeting was the state of the path (see item 8.1). The clerk is organising a meeting between the cricket club and the croquet club who would like to start playing at the Rec. Some fixtures are being added to the calendar as they are confirmed.

8.4 There has been a generous anonymous offer to provide a new de-fib at the Pavilion. After a brief discussion, the clerk was asked to source one and arrange installation.

8.5 Path - see item 8.1

9. Dark Skies Update

SP provided an update on the festival which was going well. Events so far had been very well received and well attended. A talk about wildlife at night had provided some worrying statistics. Doug Edworthy, Chair of the Astronomical Society had talked to approximately 50 people about how to star gaze. The feedback sheets were excellent. The final couple of events are scheduled for the coming days.

10. Emergency / Resilience Planning

10.1 Tracy Hoad had held a meeting with residents who had recently experienced flooding and Dan Sargent & Luke Ball from the Environment Agency (EA) and Dean Morrison from the Sussex Flow Initiative. Residents discussed various preventative measures, but they were largely deemed unsuitable. This will be investigated further upstream. Dean Morrison is doing a report & wanted as many photos as possible. The gauge in the stream will be repositioned to a more effective location. Hand-cutting of the banks which hadn't taken place last year due to the drought will be carried out as scheduled.

10.2 GT and RD had met to update the Emergency Plan. They were contacting previous team leaders, and all those contacted are happy to continue in their role. They will get together again to review additional arrangements.

11. Neighbourhood Plan

RD had circulated the new terms of reference detailing the group's change of name, and the need for only 3 members to include one parish councillor and one resident to attend meetings. They were approved by all members and RD will report back.

12. **West St Leonards Neighbourhood Plan Consultation** – supportive comments previously circulated were approved and the clerk was asked to submit them for the consultation.

13. Town & Country Planning

After some discussion, and comments from members of the public, the following submissions were agreed and approved.

13.1 RR/2023/71/P Blacksmith's Cottage, Sandrock Hill, Crowhurst TN33 9AT

Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application but requests 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 Neighbourhood Plan.*
- 2. Any new work does not affect the flow of water during flooding events and is not detrimental to the neighbouring properties.*
- 3. Any new hard-standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).*
- 4. The new building can never be sold under separate title from the main residence.*
- 5. Parking for the main residence should be kept available on-site.*

13.2 RR/2023/148/P Upper Wilting Farm, Crowhurst Road, Crowhurst TN38 8EG

Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application and request that if Rother are minded to grant permission, 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 Neighbourhood Plan*
- 2. Any new hard-standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).*
- 3. Materials used to be in keeping with the local area as per the High Weald Design Guide.*
- 4. Installation of bird and bat boxes where possible as mentioned in policy CE3.2 (vi) of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan.*

14. Warm Space & Warmer Crowhurst

14.1 LR reported that the warm space initiative continues to be a success. The pub is the perfect venue for the numbers attending (8-over 20) and word of mouth has proved to be effective. Everybody who has participated has praised the effort & enjoyed it immensely. Still plan to review things at the end of March. RD thanked all councillors involved for making it a success.

14.2 Crowhurst Warmer Homes – the planning application for the solar farm has to be submitted by the end of March. RD suggested an additional parish council meeting to discuss this formally and Richard Watson from Energise Sussex Coast can attend to answer any questions. Members agreed that a wider public meeting would be useful, and the date of Monday 6th March was agreed. The clerk will make the necessary arrangements.

15. Community Map

The clerk reported that the grant application had been successful. See item 5.6 SP wanted to thank the clerk for her work in completing the application form and its successful outcome. Andy Pope is keen to progress the project and complete artwork early March, particularly as conditions for funding need to be met by the end of the financial year. A meeting is planned to finalise text and production.

16. Grass Cutting Trial

Members agreed to continue with the rural verge trial and the clerk will confirm with Highways by the deadline.

17. Councillor Updates on External Bodies

17.1 Village Hall Management Committee – GT reported that there had been a meeting, and the VH is nicely in profit. There are some small maintenance jobs which will be carried out in the summer holidays and the energy assessment for the Village Hall grant project is due to take place on 13th March.

- 17.2 Policing Meeting – LR reported that there is a new sergeant and the organisation of meetings has improved. The next one is due to take place on Thursday 23rd February. Updated patrol plans have been requested.
- 17.3 Combe Valley CIC. GT said that the next meeting is on 22nd February, and he will circulate the minutes to anyone who'd like to see them.

18. Clerk's Report

- 18.1 The A5 election leaflet to be distributed with the next issue of the Crowhurst News was approved.
- 18.2 The Clerk asked for any further comments for the NPPF consultation – SP will provide responses for the environmental questions.
- 18.3 The Co-op bank has confirmed the addition of Cllrs Roller & Mitcheson as new signatories,.
- 18.4 Hadlow Down PC had circulated a letter asking for collective action with Highways. SP suggested a reply that asks to be kept informed of developments.

19. Review of Council Policy

Members agreed to sign up to the Civility & Respect pledge having considered the previously circulated material. The clerk will make the necessary updates to the website etc.

20. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

Parish Assembly

21. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Monday 6th March at 7.30pm in the Village Hall and then again on Monday 20th March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 10.03pm

Signed by

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Date: