

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 15th January 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Geoff Thomas (GT), Sonia Plato (SP), Lynda Roller (LR), Jill Mitcheson (JM), Sue Laimbeer (SL) and John Goddard (JG).

County/district councillor: Chas Pearce, RDC and Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk

1. Public Questions

There were no members of the public present.

2. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Cllr Laimbeer - Annual Fayre Committee, Horticultural Group & 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 18th December 2023 as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

5.1 Sandbags – clerk to contact the Environment Agency about their removal.

5.2 Pre-school extension – SP raised the emails circulated by the Youth Club committee following the approval last month by the parish council of the pre-school outdoor art area extension. In the past, the PC trustees carried out a risk assessment of the outside area and the youth club is also responsible for the outside area shared with the pre-school. The Youth Club's concern is if there is any additional risk and who is responsible insurance-wise? GT clarified that pre-school hire from the Youth Club, so should have talked to them before coming to the parish council for approval. The Youth Club has flagged up the changes and has asked for a risk assessment to be carried out. They have sent through the documents regarding insurance. The Chair & clerk agreed to meet with the pre-school and the Youth Club representative to clarify the situation and will report back at the next meeting.

5.3 Tree safety survey – JG & SP met with Andrew Hills who had carried out the tree survey and agreed the priority works. He has provided a revised quote which the clerk had circulated. Members

approved the revised quote and asked the Clerk to confirm the works to be carried out ideally during the February half-term.

5.4 Tennis court / MUGA - The clerk confirmed that further questions had been answered before Christmas. The grants department had rung that day with a suggestion to increase the amount requested to £19,250 in case additional funding could not be sourced. He also asked if the Parish Council would be able to increase their contribution by £5,000 in the eventuality that no other funding was sourced. The clerk confirmed that there were sufficient earmarked reserves, and members approved the plan. SP and the clerk will submit the Sport for All National Lottery fund application and SP will arrange the meeting with volunteers about other sources of funding which hadn't happened before Christmas due to a lot of covid in the village.

6. Representations from District & County Councillors

CP reported that there had been an excellent response to the budget consultations, and the closure of the public toilets had also led to a lot of public response. The latter consultation has resulted in the toilets at Devonshire Square, Mount Street and Pett Level remaining open.

The financial outlook has deteriorated over the last 2 years largely due to an increased demand for temporary accommodation which has trebled. Strong financial management is required and the final decision about the budget will be made on 26th February. There is pressure to increase council tax on holiday lets and second homes which could bring in £360k per annum, but this can't be done until 2025/'26. Finally, he mentioned the landslip on Forewood Lane and the Open Day at Combe Valley Countryside Park on Wednesday 17th January.

KF reported that there were 3 good candidates being interviewed to replace the current Director of Childrens' services who is retiring. OFSTED had recently carried out their inspection of The Childrens' Services department, but the report had not yet been received. ESCC haven't made any budget decisions yet.

7. Financial Matters

- 7.1 The financial report to 31st December had been previously circulated and was approved by members.
- 7.2 The payments report for January was considered and approved.
- 7.3 The bank reconciliation to 31st December 2023 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chairman.
- 7.4 The final draft of the budget for '24/'25 was approved and members approved the corresponding precept request. The clerk was asked to complete & submit the request to Rother before the end of January deadline.
- 7.5 The purchase of the replacement part for the water sewage treatment plant was approved at a cost of £636 including VAT.

8. Recreation Ground

8.1 SL had carried out the recent inspection and reported no changes since the last report. She mentioned that the decking on the Pavilion is very slippery and needs jet-washing. The clerk was asked to put up a 'Caution' sign until the maintenance could be arranged. The putty, and door sills need work as previously mentioned, and the clerk confirmed that the handyman hadn't been able to carry out exterior work due to the weather conditions. The offer of help from the Football Club to use volunteers to carry out some of the maintenance on the Pavilion was discussed, and members accepted this offer, and SL & JG will liaise with Dean Jinks to discuss which works and when they could be carried out.

CP mentioned the herringbone drainage that had been put in in 1982 and suggested that the two outlets should be checked and possibly cleared. JG offered to check the outlets.

8.2 The handyman had not been to Crowhurst since his last visit at the end of November. The clerk will provide an updated list of outstanding items and JG/SL will liaise with the football club volunteers about the work required.

8.3 Tennis court / MUGA – see item 5.4

8.4 See 8.1

9. Parish Meeting – Sandrock Hill

GT asked for members thoughts following the discussion at last week's meeting. SL thinks it will be an expensive exercise, and JM said that the safety aspect alone should make it worth the price. SP said it has been talked about for several years, and there should certainly be a poll of residents. LR agreed that a public meeting is required. After discussion around VH availability and time to publicise the meeting, Monday 19th February was agreed upon, and the February parish council meeting will be brought forward to the previous Tuesday 13th. The clerk will make the necessary arrangements. SP suggested asking for advice from Anthony Becvar, Soft Verges manager at ESCC Highways. In the past, posts were installed on two other verges at Nashes and by the church to create designated wildflower verges and protect them. Perhaps something similar could be done on Sandrock Hill?

10. Community Map

SP met with Andy Pope, Senior Community Rail Line Officer, 1066 line and Ben Wood who had made the frame. They considered suitable sites and have decided on a former brick flower bed at the entrance to the station and alongside the ticket office. The map would come up to a good height and could be concreted in for stability. The original planting of shrubs and plants have not been maintained and AP had suggested that volunteers could replant and maintain this as an ongoing project. SL suggested asking the Horticultural Society volunteers to tidy up and replant with potential help from CEG volunteers. AP is waiting for approval from Network South East for the map which will then be installed with the help of BW. The parish council have been asked to be responsible for the maintenance, which will primarily be the replacement of the wooden posts at some time in the future, and members agreed to this. The Railway Trustees are very happy with the outcome. GT thanked SP and asked her to pass on the parish council's thanks to others involved. SP mentioned that there are approximately 8 copies of the map left for sale at £15 each.

11. EV Charging Points

The clerk confirmed that the NDA was to prevent the information provided by Believ being used with another charging point provider. They have now had confirmation from UKPN that the grid would support 2 bays in the car park at the Rec, one fast charger, and each providing charging for 2 cars, so 4 electric vehicles in total. Members were happy for the clerk to sign the NDA for the Rec & the VH and progress next steps.

12. Bins

The bin nearest the car park at the Rec is degrading and not closing properly, so the clerk had investigated a double bin to include a recycling compartment and spoken with JM Waste about collection. Members decided a double bin was required and the clerk will obtain prices for consideration. CP will speak to the family members connected to the plaque on the old bin about where it will be relocated. Nicola Stell had asked for the bin nearest the entrance gate to the car park to be repositioned and concreted in place as it is often moved for people to park. The clerk will add this to the list of works required at the Recreation Ground.

13. Annual Parish Assembly 2024

After a brief discussion, the date of Monday 22nd April was agreed upon. Lee Oldridge's contribution at last year's assembly was excellent and encouraged attendance. The clerk suggested inviting

Andrew Mead from Rother's Waste & Recycling Dept. as a guest speaker in light of the proposed changes to waste collections in 2025. Members agreed and the clerk was asked to make the necessary arrangements.

14. Community Award 2023

The clerk was asked to write an ad style feature for the *Crowhurst News* asking for nominations. The award is normally presented at the Parish Assembly in April. Nominations will be required by the end of February for consideration at the March meeting.

15. Warm Space

LR reported that the Winter Warmer meetings had been very successful since Christmas, and the guest speaker last Sunday had been excellent. The clerk was asked to write and thank him on behalf of the parish council. There is still a concern that those who might benefit, are anxious about coming, so this coming Sunday is a 'Buddy day' where people will be encouraged to bring a friend. LR said that a lot of people from the village at large have given up their own time and she is very pleased that it has met its aims of providing an amenity for the village. A First Aid talk is planned for March, and the clerk will confirm the cheque presentation by Mike Crump from the Muffin Club on Sunday 21st January. GT thanked LR again for her work co-ordinating everything.

The Food Hygiene inspection had been carried out on 10th January and approval granted and a certificate issued. One person at least is required to take an online food hygiene course which JM will organise.

16. Councillor Updates on External Bodies

16.1 Village Hall Management Committee – is meeting this week. Rother's energy Project joint procurement deadline has been extended. VH have put in their bid for double glazing & infra-red panels. Youth Club is having roof and wall insulation quotes submitted. There will potentially be a 2nd round of funding as all the money hasn't been allocated.

16.2 Policing – LR said that a report had been circulated by the previous PCSO of local incidents and there were none in Crowhurst itself. Locally farm machinery had been stolen and outbuildings broken into. All members are now receiving the Sussex Alerts updates.

16.3 Combe Valley Countryside Park – The next meeting of the committee is on 23rd February and there is an Open Day on Wednesday this week.

17. Clerk's Report / Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

17.1 Emergency Wardens Meeting – 17th January at 7pm

17.2 Rec User Group Meeting – 25th January at 7.30pm

17.3 SP said that the analysis of the Neighbourhood Plan responses was due soon, having closed on 12th January. Julia Edwards from RDC had made some helpful comments which will be incorporated in the Draft Design Guide and NP Review documents. Next steps are: collation of resident responses to the recent NP consultation which will inform the draft NP; submission of these revisions to RDC; referral to the NP Examiner who will advise whether the NP Review will need to go to a Referendum (Reg16) which would be organized by RDC.

17.4 The clerk was asked to chase Rother's Chief Executive for a formal response to the PC's complaint about tree felling of trees and the area protected by a TPO on the land adjacent to Penroy on Chapel Hill, and to ask to be kept informed about works on the site. SP also reported that the Environment Group are very concerned about the risk of silt going into the Powdermill Stream which would be

extremely detrimental to invertebrates in the Stream. They are hoping to monitor the situation which would then need to be reported as a serious incident to the Environment Agency.

17.5 The clerk was asked to follow up regarding the trees overhanging Chapel Hill by reporting them to Highways. The clerk also reminded members that the next SLR meeting is scheduled for 6th February, and she will include the matter on the agenda also.

18. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Tuesday 13th February 2024** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

Signed by

Date: