

# Crowhurst

## PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the **ANNUAL MEETING** of the Parish Council held on  
**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 7.30pm**  
**in Crowhurst Village Hall, Forewood Lane, Crowhurst.**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Geoff Thomas (Chair), Sonia Plato (Vice-Chair), John Goddard & Sue Laimbeer

District/County Councillors present: None

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk & Maureen Collins, Deputy Clerk and 3 members of the public

<b>1.</b>	<b>ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN</b> Cllr Geoff Thomas was elected to continue as Chairman of the parish council.
<b>2.</b>	<b>ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN</b> Cllr Sonia Plato was elected to continue as Vice-Chair of the parish council.
<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE &amp; REGISTERS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS</b> The Chair and Vice-Chair signed their acceptance of office forms and the clerk reminded members of the need to update their register of interests if there had been any changes.
<b>4.</b>	<b>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</b> A question was asked if there was a need to keep a look out for Asian Hornets in the area, as recently mentioned by the Environment Group. SP said yes definitely, and pictures were available to help identify them. The Chair suggested circulating the information more widely on the village email.
<b>5.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Koorosh Ashrafi, Jill Mitcheson, Lynda Roller, Chas Pearce, RDC and Kathryn Field, ESCC.
<b>6.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> Received from: Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee Cllr Laimbeer – Annual Fayre and the Environment Group Cllr Plato – Youth Club & Crowhurst Environment Group
<b>7.</b>	<b>ROTHER'S LOCAL PLAN 2020-2040</b> Craig Steenhoff from Rother's Planning Policy Team made a brief presentation on the new Local Plan 2020-2040 and to promote the 12-week consultation period which opened recently and will run until 23 <sup>rd</sup> July. Full details can be found at: <a href="https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan/local-plan-review/">https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan/local-plan-review/</a> Hard copies are available at local libraries and Bexhill Town Hall. There will also be public exhibitions starting from tomorrow, 21 <sup>st</sup> May, in Rye, Battle, Bexhill, Brede, Ticehurst, Westfield, Robertsbridge and Fairlight. These run on various dates until 11 <sup>th</sup> July (see website for further details).

	<p>He then gave a brief summary of the new plan which included some key facts – 83% of the local authority is covered by the High Weald National Landscape (formerly the AONB) which is unusual in the south-east. Half of the population live in Bexhill, and the other half in rural parishes. There are a large number of visitors to the area, particularly over the summer months, and there are several areas with poor infrastructure.</p> <p>There are two overall priorities: “Green to the Core” which emphasises the need to consider the impact of planning decisions on the climate emergency, biodiversity crisis and the High Weald National Landscape and “Live Well Locally” which recognises that in all planning decisions, the goal is to create healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities.</p> <p>The new Local Plan includes chapters on proposed strategic policies relating to the distribution and delivery of housing, employment floorspace, community facilities and supporting infrastructure across the district. He talked about how the district has been split into 5 areas, and highlighted the need for small scale, sensitive development. When adopted, the Plan’s policies will be used to determine planning applications.</p> <p>He finished by asking the council to promote the consultation widely amongst residents and encouraging public participation. He then answered some questions from members of the NP Review Group and councillors, namely about the time scale, and the incorporation of the Neighbourhood Plan within the Local Plan. The Chairman thanked him for coming, and he left the meeting together with the members of the public.</p>
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>ADOPTION OF MINUTES</b></p> <p>The Chairman was authorised to approve and sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting of Crowhurst Parish Council held on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024 as a true and correct record.</p>
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</b></p> <p>The proposed dates for future meetings of the parish council had previously been circulated and were approved. They are confirmed as:</p> <p>2024 – 17<sup>th</sup> June, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 18<sup>th</sup> November &amp; 16<sup>th</sup> December.  2025 – 20<sup>th</sup> January, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 17<sup>th</sup> March &amp; 14<sup>th</sup> April</p> <p>All meetings will take place at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Crowhurst.</p>
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED IN THIS AGENDA:</b></p> <p>10.1 Sandbags – the clerk has chased the Environment Agency again about removing the filled sandbags that are rotting in the Recreation Ground car park.</p> <p>10.2 Emergency Wardens – the clerk has collated almost all mobile numbers for the emergency wardens and will create the WhatsApp group for ease of rapid communication when required.</p> <p>10.3 EV Charging Points – no further action since the previous meeting.</p> <p>10.4 Edendale Garden – At a recent meeting with Belmont Healthcare about Edendale Care Home, they had asked for ways in which they could be more involved in the community and promote the care home. It had been suggested that the gardens around the home could be used (perhaps as allotments), and improved by volunteers from the community and the Horticultural Society, and the parish council offered to facilitate this if they are keen to follow up with a further commitment.</p>
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>REPRESENTATIONS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS</b></p> <p>Both district and county councillors were absent but had nothing to report since the last meeting.</p>
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING:</b></p> <p>12.1 To consider the following new Planning Application and provide comments to Rother District Council:</p> <p><b>12.1.1 RR/2024/702/P – Moorbank Farm, Old Forewood Lane, Crowhurst TN33 9AA</b>  <i>Proposal: Single storey rear extension (alternative to approved Lawful Development Certificate RR/2024/243/O)</i></p>

After a brief discussion and examination of the documents submitted, councillors agreed to support the application and submit the following comments online:

*Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application and asks that if Rother District Council are minded granting permission, then the following conditions be 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. The Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide is followed regarding building style and materials used.*
- 3. Any new hard-standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).*

**12.1.2 RR/2024/598/P – Crowhurst Park, Telham Lane, Battle TN33 OSL**

*Proposal: Installation of new drainage system for park consisting of 1no package treatment plant and 1no septic tank*

The following comments had been previously submitted using the clerk’s delegated authority:

*Crowhurst Parish Council has no objections to this application but if permission is granted we would like the following conditions to be 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. The Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide is followed regarding building style and materials used.*
- 3. Policy CE5 of the Neighbourhood Plan requires that the existing network of watercourses shall be maintained and protected. The proposed package treatment plant will treat the wastewater from the park to ensure it is of sufficient quality to not adversely affect the watercourses that it will be discharged to.*

*And finally, that they follow the suggestions given in the Eco report, namely that lighting can be detrimental to foraging and commuting bats. Any external lighting proposed for the development should be sensitive to the broadleaved woodland and scrub, avoiding direct illumination of them.*

**12.1.3 RR/2023/1201/P – Swainham Lane – Fields to the south & east, Crowhurst**

*Proposal: Installation of solar panels, security fencing, CCTV cameras, underground cabling, inverters, environmental enhancement measures and other ancillary development*

**\*\*This application will be discussed at a separate planning meeting taking place on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 – an extension to submit comments has been granted.\*\***

It was further agreed to publicise the additional meeting in the usual manner and also to include a leaflet drop to properties in Swainham Lane. The clerk will make the necessary arrangements and councillors will deliver the flyers.

**13. RFO REPORT:**

13.1 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

13.1.1 The clerk had previously circulated the full report from Michelle Webber of Mulberry & Co. following the audit. There were no recommendations and councillors approved the report.

13.1.2 The clerk then read aloud the Annual Governance Statement and members agreed to the signing thereof. GT and the clerk duly signed the form.

13.1.3 Section 2 the Accounting Statement had previously been circulated and was approved for signing.

13.1.4 The clerk confirmed the dates of the Notice of Electors’ Rights to be 3 June to 12 July 2024.

13.2 The end of year financial report to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 had previously been circulated together with a summary of variances against budget. These were approved.

13.3 The end of year Bank Reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 together with supporting bank statements had been circulated and was approved.

13.4 The payments report for May 2024 was approved for payment.

	<p>13.5 The list of regular payments had been circulated and was approved. The Chairman signed a copy of the list.</p> <p>13.6 The financial report to 30<sup>th</sup> April '24, together with the bank reconciliation had been circulated and was approved.</p> <p>13.7 Some information was shared about alternative deposit accounts paying improved interest rates, but with varying conditions of notice. It was agreed that an amount of £30,000 (the General Reserve) would be transferred to an account paying the best rate of interest, even if it requires a longer period of notice. Some of the earmarked reserves are about to be spent on the tennis court/MUGA project, and thereafter an alternative deposit account may be considered for the remainder of the earmarked reserves.</p> <p>13.8 The clerk had previously circulated a summary report of planned spending and reserves, including CIL monies received. This was duly noted.</p>
<b>14.</b>	<p><b>RECREATION GROUND:</b></p> <p>14.1 GT had carried out the monthly inspection showing Cllr Ashrafi the process. There were no additional issues, and the clerk has reported the various ongoing jobs to the handyman (see 14.4).</p> <p>14.2 Following the recent vandalism, a quote had been submitted to re-stabilise the bollard lights (only the 6 most damaged ones). The price seemed high, and the clerk was asked to obtain an alternative quote from the handyman. There is a meeting with the PCSO on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the recent problems, and SL reported that increased police patrols have been noticed.</p> <p>14.3 The next Rec User Group meeting will take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> May – GT, SP, SL &amp; JG will attend.</p> <p>14.4 The handyman is finishing other exterior jobs and hopes to return to Crowhurst mid-June. The clerk will provide an updated list for his attention.</p>
<b>15.</b>	<p><b>STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS &amp; OTHER POLICIES</b></p> <p>15.1 The new model Financial Regulations 2024/'25 had been circulated. The Chairman noted that a councillor should be nominated to sign off end of year bank reconciliations and supporting bank statements as a record for the parish council (2.6). The clerk suggested JM be nominated as she most regularly uses online banking for payment approval and can easily check the balances are as stated. This will be confirmed at the next meeting.</p> <p>15.2 The Standing Orders were again unchanged from '22/'23 and had been circulated previously. Members approved them for re-adoption.</p> <p>15.3 The clerk had circulated an updated monthly playground inspection rota for 2024/'25. Members approved the rota.</p> <p>15.4 The deputy clerk had researched the schedule of Councillors' lead responsibilities and shared a document with suggestions for newly combined areas. This will be shared by email and agreed at the next meeting.</p>
<b>16.</b>	<p><b>ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY</b></p> <p>GT said that having a guest speaker is definitely a good draw, and similar numbers (around 40) had attended again this year which is a good turn out for a small parish. The proposed date of Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025 was agreed and SP suggested that a speaker from the International Dark Skies programme could be invited.</p>
<b>17.</b>	<p><b>NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN</b></p> <p>GT confirmed that the meeting taking place on 5<sup>th</sup> June is not a public meeting, but a first step to help the parish council decide on an agenda for a public meeting, and ensure the correct process is followed. Representatives from AiRS will be attending as well as members of the NP Review Group and parish councillors.</p>
<b>18.</b>	<p><b>MEMORIAL BENCH</b></p> <p>The application previously circulated for a memorial bench located at the Pavilion for Chris Newton was approved.</p>

<p><b>19.</b></p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR UPDATES ON EXTERNAL BODIES (IF ANY):</b>  SP confirmed that as she had been away, the official launch of the Community Map was slightly delayed. The suggestion of a Community Picnic for all those involved was thought to be a good idea, and she will make further enquiries about when and where it could take place. The clerk confirmed that the map has been added to the insurance policy.  GT reported that there had been some personnel changes on the committee of the Combe Valley Countryside Park and that the next meeting will be in June/July. He will circulate any further information as it is received.</p>
<p><b>20.</b></p>	<p><b>CLERK'S REPORT/CORRESPONDENCE</b>  20.1 An enquiry had been received to hire the Recreation Ground &amp; Pavilion for a birthday party on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. This was approved subject to the usual terms &amp; conditions of hire.  20.2 A thankyou letter had been received from Ros Day for her award.  20.3 The clerk confirmed that after checking with Rother DC, some CIL monies paid had been at a rate of 15%, not 25% for having adopted a Neighbourhood Plan. The additional sums will be credited to the account in the coming days.</p>
<p><b>21.</b></p>	<p><b>INFORMATION FROM COUNCILLORS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS</b>  SP confirmed that the first meeting of tennis court/MUGA volunteers is taking place on Friday at 5pm in The Plough. The clerk was asked to contact Johnny French about the fencing removal now that he is back from holiday.  GT suggested that the playground refurbishment project is discussed at the next meeting as various items needing improvement.</p>
<p><b>22.</b></p>	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING:</b>  To note that the next meeting of the Council will be an additional planning meeting on <b>Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 at 7.30pm</b> in the Village Hall.   The next ordinary meeting will be held on <b>Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.</b></p>