

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

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Geoff Thomas (Chair) (GT), Sonia Plato (Vice Chair) (SP), Lynda Roller (LR), Jill Mitcheson (JM), John Goddard (JG). Sue Laimbeer (SL)
District Councillor Chas Pearce, RDC

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

Proceedings are recorded to support the clerk in writing the minutes. The recording will be deleted when the minutes are ratified.

1. Public Questions

Will Kemp reported that the hedges had recently been cut during bird nesting season. He asked for a strongly worded letter to be written to those responsible. GT advised that the Parish Council did not have the authority to do this but undertook to notify the Environment Officer to see what could be done. GT felt that the Parish Council should put together some information to advise individuals that they can notify the appropriate authorities directly. SP suggested that the Crowhurst Environment Group could write a notice for the website and the Crowhurst News.

2. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr Koorosh Ashrafi, County Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC

3. Declaration of Interests

Received from:

Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee

Cllr Plato – Youth Club & Crowhurst Environment Group

Cllr Lynda Roller – Crowhurst Environment Group & Sunday Social

Cllr Sue Laimbeer – Crowhurst Environment Group & Annual Fayre Committee

4. Adoption of Minutes

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the parish council held on 17th June 2024.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

5.1 SLR meeting - SP was advised at the recent RALC meeting that it is still possible for representatives of the ESCC Highways team to visit in person. She would like the Clerk to request this to take place in September.

5.2 Fallen trees. Two trees on the bank have now fallen at Chapel Hill along and across the road - The Clerk will write to the landowner advising that the parish council have already notified the landowner of concerns and would now ask that some tree works are required as a matter of urgency.

5.3 Ancillary accommodation, Court Lodge – Having investigated permissions granted, the Clerk has reported the matter to Enforcement.

5.4 Emergency Warden meeting notes – No further action since the last meeting.

5.5 EV Charging points – No further action since the last meeting.

5.6 Dog Waste Bins – Cllr Pearce has asked for this to be put on the agenda of the next meeting of the Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC.

6. Representations from District & County Councillors

Cllr Pearce reported that it continued to remain quiet. At Battle Station there is to be access to both sides of the line, rather than having to use the bridge. Rother is reviewing the application of CIL, with proposed changes including combining Rural Rother and Bexhill CIL monies. SP reported that Laura Ford, RDC CEO had raised this at the RALC meeting the previous week where concerns had been raised about its potential negative impact on parishes in Rural Rother.

7. Town & Country Planning

Councillors were disappointed that Crowhurst Neighbourhood Development Plan policies had not been referenced in the recent planning approval for Crowhurst Park, as agreed by Rother Planning. This has previously been raised with Rother Planning as it has happened several times in the past. The Clerk will contact the Planning Department for a response.

7.1 RR/2024/1076/P –The Birches, Forewood Lane, Crowhurst, TN33 9AB

Proposal: Change of cladding of upper floors to black horizontal timber board cladding, including installation of new guttering. Opening of entrance façade and resurfacing of entrance and part of driveway. New garage doors and two sloped roof windows in garage.

The applicant attended the meeting to answer any questions and to give further detail. The councillors appreciated his input and after a brief discussion, members agreed on the following comments which the clerk will submit online:

Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application. If permission is granted, the following conditions are requested:

- 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 is made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).*

8. Financial Matters

8.1 The financial report to 30th June had been circulated and was approved by members.

8.2 The payments report for July was considered and approved.

8.3 The bank reconciliation to 30th June 2024 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chair.

8.4 The comments of the external auditor were noted. PKF Littlejohn have received the AGAR forms and asked one question by email. No other queries raised, and a report will follow shortly.

9. Recreation Ground

9.1 KA had carried out the monthly inspection and had forwarded some photographs to councillors for their consideration. This prompted a discussion by the councillors who decided to wait for the annual report of the playground equipment before undertaking any further minor repairs. Maintenance already identified will be undertaken by the Handyman when he next visits. The defibrillator at the Village Hall was checked by the Deputy Clerk.

9.2 The Clerk reported that the current handyman has not attended since the last meeting, due to pressure of work, but he is expected to start on the list of outstanding work at the end of July/ beginning of August. JG, SL, and the Deputy Clerk will meet with a potential new handyman within the next few weeks. It is hoped to meet with Jonny French at the same time to allow him to quote for the work required to stabilise the bollard lights.

- 9.3 The next Annual Inspection of the playground will take place in October. Agreement was given to pay £178.50 + VAT to Play Inspections once invoiced.
- 9.4 Approval was given to pay Nick Stell £50 for clearing weeds from the sewage treatment plant.
- 9.5 It was agreed to establish a Working Group to produce a plan of action for the recreation ground, including the playground, car park and Pavillion. Matters are currently being attended to on an ad hoc basis and GT felt that it is important to establish an order of priority. The car park or playground had previously been earmarked as next on the order of works to be undertaken and there are reserves available to pay for this. The Working Group will consist of members of the parish council, District Cllr Pearce, and others who can bring expertise to the group. Tillman Lenz, who was at the meeting, was keen to become involved. The first meeting will take place on Wednesday, 24th July at 7.15pm at The Plough.
- 9.6 Whilst in the long term a more robust CCTV system may be needed it was agreed that additional lighting would not improve matters. No further action will be taken at the present time.
- 9.7 The next Rec Users Group meeting will take place on Thursday, 19th September at 7.30pm. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to Rec Users to advise that clutter would be cleared from the Pavillion if it was not removed within the next 3 weeks. A notice to this effect will also be displayed in the Pavillion.
- 9.8 Repairs to the car park will be discussed by the newly created Working Group.
- 9.9 An extended family group had been seen driving motorized tractor-like vehicles across the tennis court and football field. After a brief discussion it was agreed that an appropriate sign be placed on the car park barrier prohibiting this. The Clerk will research what is available and report back to the council.

10. MUGA Project

The MUGA project is making good progress and SP was delighted to announce that the PC had received an award from the National Lottery of £19,992 which combined with the Rother Community Grant will cover the full cost of the project. Conditions for the Lottery Grant including publicising the award will need to be followed. It was agreed to announce the award in the Crowhurst News and Village email. The equipment has been ordered and the ground sockets will be installed on 24th & 25th July. The equipment will be assembled at the same time. The weeds that have grown up around the court need to be removed professionally before cleaning and marking can take place. This was discussed by councillors and provisional agreement was given to spend up to £500 + VAT for a licensed herbicide user to carry out the work. JG will liaise with the Clerk to put together a proposal to be circulated to all members of the parish council. Once the cleaning and marking of the court has been done, fencing will take place in early August. GT asked for all MUGA group meetings to be formalized and minutes circulated. The next meeting of the group will be on Sunday, 21st July at 4pm. Susie Edwards who has taken on the role of Administrator and Bookings for the Community MUGA Group provided an update on plans for the group and activities. The revised Launch date for the MUGA with BBQ and Have a Go sessions has now been set for either Saturday 7th or Sunday 8th September for village residents, depending on confirmation by the Clerk re use of the Recreation Ground on those dates.

Retrospective approval was given for the 50% fencing deposit (£8,131.20 incl VAT), tennis nets and posts (£415.15 incl VAT) and an 80% downpayment for the ground-socket works & basketball posts, netball posts and 5-a-side football nets (£6,038.60 incl VAT).

11. Neighbourhood Plan Review

The NP Monitoring and Review group are in the very final stages of their review. Chris Davidson, Chair of the group had provided a report for the Council. GT reported that Rother had advised the group recently, that as the Plan is now more than 5 years old it is no longer afforded the protection given by paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which means there is some urgency in

progressing to Section 16, the next consultation stage of the revised plan and its submission to Rother District Council. The PC delegated the NP Review Group to respond on behalf of the parish and take this forward.

12. Coronation Community Orchard Grant Application

The Coronation Community Grant application has been approved subject to quotes for benches and commemorative plaque which SP has now submitted. Further details have also been requested regarding the ownership/designation and/or permissions to plant trees on the Millenium Garden. A total of twelve traditional varieties of apples trees will be planted, six in the picnic area, four in Muriel's meadow and two in the Millenium Garden. The clerk will investigate proof of ownership of the Millenium Garden. SP reported that the two trees could easily be relocated to Muriel's Meadow if the Millennium Garden site proved to be unworkable or held up the grant.

13. Additional Storage for the Village Hall

GT will add this to the agenda of the next Village Hall Committee meeting. SP also raised the question of storage for PC property and asked that this be pursued.

14. Cinderbrook Footpath

As part of the NP Review, it is proposed that the footpath across Cinderbrook be diverted to begin higher up adjacent to the farm buildings to avoid the very muddy state of the path which made it inaccessible in wet winter months. Both the landowner and the farmer concerned were in favour of the proposed diversion. The matter was discussed by councillors and approval was given to formally request the diversion of footpath 17a to ESCC in line with the Neighbourhood Plan Review proposal.

15. RALC Meeting.

SP had attended the recent RALC meeting. She reported that Lucie Bolton, Climate Strategy Officer has left and that some functions were going to be combined. Laura Ford, the new CEO of Rother had attended the meeting. Crowhurst had been mistakenly omitted from RALC circulation lists but was now reinstated.

16. Sunday Social Update

LR updated the council on the plans for this winter's Sunday Social sessions. She has again applied to Tesco and Sainsburys supermarkets for their support. There will be an article going into the next Crowhurst News asking for volunteers. She would also be very interested to hear from anyone willing to give a talk or make a presentation. On Sunday 10th November, and as part of the Crowhurst Dark Skies Festival, there will be a talk about bats which should be of interest to all ages. SP will ask Ralph Hobbs if he would be prepared to talk about Moths at the first session on Sunday 3rd November.

17. Annual Fayre Update

SL to liaise with Diane Stainsby to obtain the electricity meter reading. She will also advise her of the additional charge for the lift of the blue waste bin. The clerk can prepare an invoice for these items to send to the Fayre Committee.

18. Councillor Updates on External Bodies (if any)

- GT reported that the Village Hall Management Committee has received a provisional offer from Rother of £40,000 for roof insulation and solar panels on the Village Hall. There may also be a further £13,000 available for associated works.
- SP reported that WestOak will be starting work on 29th July on insulation at the Youth Club building. She alerted the PC to the fact that vehicles will need to drive across the Recreation Ground that week to carry out the work. This will be managed by the Youth Club and is funded by Rother's

Village Hall Insulation Project. The Junior Youth Club starts again in the second week of September, and it is hoped to start the Senior Youth Group again in Spring 2025.

- District Cllr Pearce reported that the Planning Committee will be making its final decision on the Solar Farm planning application in the next few weeks. They are currently awaiting responses from the ecologists, archaeology team and Highways.

19. Clerk’s Report & Information for Councillors:

- 19.1 Digital subscription to Crowhurst News of £12 for the Clerk - Approved.
- 19.2 Safety of lithium-Ion batteries – the parish council would like it noted that they are in favour of The legislation proposed.
- 19.3 There will be a Year 6 leavers party at the Rec Ground on 23rd July, 12pm – 6.30pm. The Deputy Clerk will arrange for a Pavillion Key to be passed to the organiser.
- 19.4 The recent Stoolball tournament was a great success and over £1,400 was raised for Alzheimer’s research.
- 19.5 SALC Chair’s Forum - 8th August at 7pm – GT will attend.
- 19.6 Parish Council Noticeboard – The Deputy Clerk will investigate replacing the Perspex and will report back to the council.

20. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the PC will take place on **Monday 16th Sept 2024** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. The meeting closed at 9pm.

Signed by..... Date