

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 18th November 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Parish Councillors present: Geoff Thomas (Chair) (GF), Sonia Plato (Vice Chair) (SP), Lynda Roller (LR), John Goddard (JG), Sue Laimbeer (SL), Koorosh Ashrafi (KA)

District/ County Councillors: Chas Pearce (CP) RDC, & Kathryn Field (KF) ESCC

In attendance: Maureen Collins, Deputy Parish Clerk and Flood Warden, Tracy Hoad.

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

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 Geoff Thomas – Village Hall Committee

Cllr Sonia Plato – Youth Club & Crowhurst Environment Group

Cllr Lynda Roller – Crowhurst Environment Group & Sunday Social

Cllr Sue Laimbeer– Crowhurst Environment Group, Annual Fayre Committee and Strolling Group

4. Report from the Flood Warden

Flood Warden, Tracy Hoad, attended the meeting to give an update on recent flood prevention works that have taken place behind properties on Sandrock Hill and Sandrock Crescent. The Environment Agency cleared ditches and built up the banks of the river using spoil from their excavations. It is hoped that this may prove beneficial in reducing flooding and the situation will be monitored to see if the work has been effective. Future works, such as the repair of leaky dams downstream and the planting of floodplain woodland, have also been proposed. A meeting will take place after Christmas to establish a volunteer group to help with some of the work.

5. Councillor Vacancy

A casual vacancy has arisen following the resignation of Cllr Jill Mitcheson. An advertisement for a new councillor has been placed on the Crowhurst Parish Website, in the Crowhurst News and in the notice board. There has been no response to date. Cllr Thomas thanked Cllr Mitcheson for all she has done for the village during her time as a councillor.

6. Adoption of Minutes

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the parish council held on 14th October 2024.

7. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

7.1 Signs prohibiting motorized vehicles on the Recreation Ground – this will be actioned once a new gate has been installed in the car park.

- 7.2 Additional storage at the Village Hall – Cllr Thomas, in his capacity of Chairman of the Village Hall Committee, reported that work on the roof is continuing, with solar panels still to be installed. Following this, priority will be given to repairs to the attached storage area. Additional storage for the Parish Council will be considered at a later date
- 7.3 Dog waste bin – the Clerk is still waiting for confirmation of the collection costs. Once these have been received a decision will be made regarding the company to be engaged to collect the dog waste and to supply and install the bin.

8. Representations from District and County Councillors

District Councillor Pearce reported that there is still a lot of uncertainty due to the change of government, as RDC are still unsure of what money they will be receiving. Additional funding of £26,500 has been received to support people faced with sleeping rough in extreme temperatures over the coming months. The Winter Pressure 2024/25 Government funding is part of a total of £10 million pounds for councils across London and 115 other local authorities.

CP gave details of free parking in Battle and Bexhill over the Christmas period. There will be free parking in Battle on Saturday 30th November and on Saturday, 7th and 21st December. There will be free parking in Bexhill on the 7th, 8th, 14th and 21st December.

County Councillor Field reported that ESCC continues to work to identify savings in their budget which has led to some extremely difficult decisions being made. Adult social care, where significant savings will need to be found, is due for imminent inspection. There is some money available nationally for this area but recent changes in National Insurance will eat into this as the care sector has not been given the same protection as the NHS who will be shielded from the additional cost.

9. Town & Country Planning

9.1 RR/2024/1684/P – Hye House, Coach House, Royal Oak Lane, Crowhurst.

Proposal: Variation of condition including change of materials, number of roof lights, roof pitch etc
Crowhurst Parish Council agreed on the following comments which the deputy 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 runoff (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).*

9.2 RR/2024/1748/P- Windy Ridge, Swainham Lane, Crowhurst

Proposal: Replacement dwelling and outbuilding and associated works.

Crowhurst Parish Council agreed on the following comments which the deputy 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).*

10. Financial Matters

- 10.1 The financial report to 31st October had been circulated and was approved by members.
- 10.2 The payments report for November 2024 was considered and approved.
- 10.3 The bank reconciliation to 31st October 2024 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chair (GT).
- 10.4 The first draft of budget was discussed and the comments and suggestions made by members will be passed to the clerk who will prepare a second draft to be discussed at the December meeting.
- 10.5 Backdated pay for the Clerk to 1st April 2024 following the recent NALC Pay Agreement was discussed and agreement reached to pay an amount of £161.28 owed due to a scale point hourly increase of £0.63 per hour.
- 10.6 The overtime claim from both the Clerk and Deputy Clerk following additional hours worked over recent months was discussed. Approval was given to pay £321.75 to the Deputy Clerk and £382.49 to the Clerk. This will be paid from the training budget in light of the additional hours spent by them both in handing over and training for the role of clerk.

11. Recreation Ground

- 11.1 Cllr Ashrafi made the monthly playground update this month. He noted that there were still several maintenance jobs outstanding and that the woodchip level under the swings is low. Approval was given for the clerk to order additional chippings. Cllr Roller will be doing the next inspection. The deputy clerk will set up a rota for the playground and defibrillator inspection going forward and this will be placed at the front of the inspection folder.
- 11.2 The Annual Playground inspection report was received this month. An amber rating was given for various parts of the equipment noting worn ropes and nets, damaged and rotting timbers, missing bolt caps, algae and moss on some surfaces and splits and cracks to wooden structures. After a brief discussion, agreement was reached to look at using CIL monies as match funding to pay for the refurbishment of the playground. The deputy clerk will obtain three quotes from playground equipment companies and investigate the grants that are available.
- 11.3 The recent progress made by the handyman was discussed and noted.
- 11.4 The caravan that had been parked in the Recreation Ground car park has now been removed by the owner, leaving a campervan which is being used for storage. Various solutions were discussed regarding its removal, however Cllr Thomas felt that this would be difficult to do as similar vehicles that have been parked in the car park have been allowed to remain. An attempt will be made to contact the campervan owner to discuss the situation.
- 11.5 Planings – The condition of the car park was discussed. The clerk will obtain a quote for planings, and the matter will be discussed further at December's meeting.

12. Crowhurst Community MUGA

- 12.1 Cllr Ashrafi had agreed to investigate the installation of a night-vision CCTV camera for the MUGA. He was pleased to report that a supplier will be visiting the MUGA on Thursday, 21st November to give a quote for the necessary work. He will explore other options and endeavour to get a further quote as a comparison.
- 12.2 JG had previously reported that the creation of a French drain around the perimeter of the court will require around 3 to 4 tonnes of shingle at a cost of approximately £2000. He will obtain some quotes and forward these to the clerk and deputy clerk. At the October meeting members had given their approval for the clerk to use delegated authority to make the necessary payments.

12.3 The Asguard storage shed is to be sited on the concrete base at the side of the MUGA. It had previously been agreed that once the area is cleared, sleepers will be laid to raise the shed off the ground to protect it from flooding. Cllr Goddard will obtain a quote for the work to be done.

13. Neighbourhood Plan Review

The NP Review documents are currently with Rother District Council as part of Reg 16 consultation with residents together with the appointment of the legal examiner.

Hastoe Housing Association have been contacted by the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Review Group regarding their possible involvement in NP designated housing sites.

14. Crowhurst Environment Group Grant Application

Cllrs Thomas, Goddard and Ashrafi unanimously agreed to give retrospective approval for a grant of £893.10 for equipment and insurance costs. Cllrs Plato, Laimbeer and Roller had previously declared an interest in the Crowhurst Environment Group and were unable to take any part in the discussion.

15. Grounds Maintenance Contract

A tendering process for the Grounds Maintenance contract has begun as part of the budget setting process, as the current contract has been in place for over five years. John O'Conner, Orchard Landscapes and Grasstex were invited to respond. As Grasstex quoted for verge cutting only they will no longer be considered, and a third contractor will be identified and asked to quote.

Grass cutting options have been confirmed with ESCC. We will continue to receive Rural Option 2 – environmental enhanced scheme (reduced rural service) and Urban Grass Cutting Option 3 – self delivery.

16. Cinderbrook Footpath Diversion

Chris Davidson, Kazimir Diment, Sonia Plato and John Feltwell, Chairman of Battle Ramblers, met recently to ensure a clearly agreed and understood route for the proposed diversion of the 1066 footpath across the Cinderbrook field. At the on-site meeting a route was agreed which appeared to be beneficial to both walkers and the landowner. Subsequently however, Chris Davidson was informed that the Diments were no longer in agreement with the change of route and wished to withdraw their support for the diversion.

17. Pavillion/Rec Refurbishment Project

Councillors discussed the Recreation Ground Survey which is to be delivered to all villagers to canvas opinions about the improvements they would like to see to the Pavillion, Recreation Ground and Playground. Our local postal delivery people have kindly offered to deliver these, with Cllrs delivering to properties outside of their routes. The survey will also be posted on the website where a link will enable residents to reply online. All other replies can be posted in the Village Hall post-box. It was agreed to post the surveys out before Christmas with a deadline in January.

18. Sunday Social Update

Cllr Roller reported that the first three sessions have all gone smoothly. There have been three presentations which were very well received and LR wishes to thank all of those who have given up their valuable time. Donations made by those attending the sessions mean that there is now enough money to allow Sunday Social events to run until the end of the winter season. A special festive session will be held on Sunday, 8th December. All are very welcome to attend, including those visiting the Christmas Tree festival at the Church.

19. Network Rail Works in Station Road

Network Rail have cut back the verge on a section of Station Road, and it is looking very neat and tidy, and the grit bins are now easy to access. Several compliments were received regarding the politeness of the team doing the work and these will be passed on to Chris Page, Section Manager Off track for Network Rail, Crowhurst Station. The drains in Station Road are also on Network Rail's list of works to be done and this will be completed by another team in due course.

20. Heritage and Natural Asset Register

A TPO is now in place for the 1066 Yew in St George's churchyard. The deputy clerk will contact Sarah Shepherd, RDC/Wealden, to ask her to consider granting a TPO for the 200–300-year-old yew that was damaged by adjacent works at Court Lodge Garages, having had 50% of its roots severed.

21. Councillor Updates on External Bodies (if any)

The Chair, Cllr Geoff Thomas, reported that Combe Valley CIC is currently considering a planning application for the cricket ground and is looking for alternatives to the proposals that are more in line with their ethos.

Cllr Plato reported that Cliff Dean is concerned that unlicensed fishing permits have been issued for the attenuation lake in the Country Park. This has been reported back to the Stakeholders meeting.

22. Clerk's Report & Information for Councillors:

- 22.1 The Rother Coronation Orchard Grant Scheme Grant Funding Agreement was submitted by hand last week. A 5ft Sunray bench has been ordered at a cost of £195 plus delivery. The new picnic bench for the Picnic area is funded as part of this grant and will need to be installed. The 12 traditional variety apple trees will be planted over the winter, as part of the grant,
- 22.2 A report of a possible illegal tip at Lower Wilting Farm has been received from a villager, concerned about the amount of mud on the road and the number of vehicles entering and exiting the farm. A license check and report of this is being followed up with the EA by the Deputy Clerk.
- 22.3 Councillor Goddard has obtained two quotes for a new car park gate in the Recreation Ground car park. He will obtain a third like for like quote.
- 22.4 ESCC have issued a notice for the landowner to cut back vegetation on Chapel Hill.
- 22.5 Several residents reported that damage had been done to the refuge footpath between Ballards Hill triangle and Cherry Tree house. This was caused by a contractor whilst clearing a drain. ESCC Highways department have been contacted to request that a repair is made.

23. Any Other Business

The Chair, Cllr Thomas, would like councillors to adopt a rota system for responding to planning applications. The deputy clerk will circulate applications as usual and indicate who is next on the list.

The Deputy Chair, Cllr Plato, reported that the Dark Sky's festival had been a great success with 104 pledges from Crowhurst residents. She had also recently attended a demonstration by Rye Composting, a voluntary group that provides an alternative composting service and who would be happy to share this model with Crowhurst.

24. Date of the Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Monday, 16th December 2024** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Signed by.....