

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 16th December 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)

In attendance: Maureen Collins, Parish Clerk and three 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 raised a question about TPO's for the trees in St Georges Churchyard. The Chairman used Standing Order 1(a) to bring forward agenda item 18 to allow for discussion. The Clerk reported that her recent request for a TPO on the 200–300-year-old yew which was most damaged by works at Court Lodge Garages had been refused. The reason given by Rother District Council being that the severing of its roots has "compromised the safety and health of the tree" and that "it would not thus be worthy of a TPO". Councillors agreed that the Clerk should write to Mrs. Sarah Shepherd, Development Manager Team Leader, RDC, for details of the appeals process.

The Clerk will also forward a letter to Mrs. Shepherd received from Dr John Feltwell, in his capacity as Chairman of the Crowhurst Environment Group. This outlines four matters which he feels need to be brought to the attention of RDC regarding this matter.

Mr. Kemp also asked a question about the repairs needed at the Millenium Garden. The Chairman used Standing Order 1(a) to bring forward the item for discussion. Cllr Plato advised that the wooden palings which are holding up the bank near to the bench are becoming rotten and need replacing. She advised that whilst the Crowhurst Environment Group routinely looks after the Garden, the Parish Council is responsible for its long-term maintenance in an agreement with ESCC. It was agreed that the CEG would come back to the Parish Council with a proposal /plan of what needs to be done, to include the full costs of the repair.

2. Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillor Chas Pearce and County Councillor Kathryn Field.

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. Adoption of Minutes

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the parish council held on 18th November 2024.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

- 5.1. Signs prohibiting motorized vehicles on the Recreation Ground – this item has been deferred until a new barrier gate has been installed.
- 5.2. Additional storage at the Village Hall – Cllr Ashrafi gave details of his recent discussion with Mr. Jervis, Head of the village school. After a brief discussion, Cllrs Plato, Goddard, Ashrafi, Roller and Laimbeer agreed to put together a proposal to be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting.
- 5.3. Dog waste bin – The Clerk and RFO will finalise plans for the purchase and installation of a dog waste bin at the head of the path alongside the Recreation Ground. Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC have agreed to fund the cost of the bin. Collection costs, which will be met by the Parish Council, will be confirmed by the RFO and these will be submitted for approval at the next meeting.
- 5.4. Recreation Ground gate – Cllr Goddard has obtained a quote from Crestala Fencing for a new gate to the Recreation Ground. Details of the quote will be passed to the RFO.

6. Representations from District and County Councillors

Both the District and County Councillor had sent their apologies and were not present at the meeting.

7. Councillor Vacancy

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.

8. Town & Country Planning

8.1. RR/2024/1727/P – Woodend, Forewood Lane, Crowhurst, TN33 9AA

Proposal: Amendment to plans for stand-alone solar panels in the grounds of Woodend.

Councillors were unable to see any material change to previous plans and agreed that it was not necessary to submit further comments online.

- 8.2 The clerk updated councillors about ongoing enforcement matters.

9. Financial Matters

- 9.1. The financial report to 30th November had been circulated and was approved by members.
- 9.2. The payments report for December 2024 was considered and approved.
- 9.3. The bank reconciliation to 30th November 2024 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chair (GT).
- 9.4. The second draft of the budget was discussed and the comments and suggestions made by members will be passed on to the RFO who will prepare a final draft to be approved at the January meeting.

10. Recreation Ground

- 10.1 Cllr Roller made the monthly playground inspection this month. She reported that the Playground remains much as in the last inspection. The ground in the Orchard and picnic area is very uneven, with lots of dips and long grass. Cllr Plato will ask the Crowhurst Environment Group to rake the mole hills. Cllr Goddard explained that the picnic area needs topsoil spreading to even out the ground and reseeding which could be done once the weather improves. The defibrillator is in good working order. The Recreation Ground is very wet, and the ground churned over in several areas on the football pitch. Approval was given to pay the invoice from AHS Ltd for hardwood chips to repair the surface of the play area of £339.90 (INCL VAT). Members thanked Cllr Goddard for spreading the chippings.

- 10.2 The Clerk has contacted Steve Humphries as a possible new handyman. Arrangements will be made for him to meet with Cllrs Goddard and Laimbeer who will show him what needs to be done.
- 10.3 Agreement was given for Rother to remove the abandoned vehicle on the Recreation Ground. The Clerk will contact Rother to ensure that this is done as soon as possible.
- 10.4 The Clerk has contacted Osmans and Robins to obtain quotes for the repair of the car park. Unfortunately, neither company were willing to undertake the repair themselves, advising that it would be best to engage a smaller and more local contractor. They were, however, willing to supply the planings. The Clerk will pass details of the quotes on to the RFO.

11. Crowhurst Community MUGA

- 11.1 A contractor has visited the MUGA to quote for CCTV. Cllr Ashrafi has arranged for another contractor to visit in January.
- 11.2 Cllr Goddard is waiting for Johnny French to come back to him with prices for the French Drain and soft net to protect the fencing from damage by leather footballs. He will also speak to Mr. French about installing the barrier gate once it has been purchased.
- 11.3 Cllr Goddard advised that he would bolt down the Asguard storage container once the weather improves. Cllrs thanked him for storing this and other items before installation.

Cllr Plato reported that the MUGA group will be meeting in February to begin to arrange their 'Spring Olympics' event. She also advised that there had been further interest shown in setting up a pickle ball club. She asked if the Clerk could put up a notice on the MUGA giving the MUGA email contact details for anyone wishing for further information about using the MUGA or to give bookings to Susie Edwards.

12. Neighbourhood Plan Review

The Neighbourhood Plan Review Group have chosen Liz Beth as their independent examiner.

On another matter, Cllr Plato noted that the Planning Department are still not referencing our Neighbourhood Plan and Design Guide when making planning decisions. The Clerk will write to Rother District Council to ask them to ensure that the planning team refers to our policies and take note of the comments that are entered online.

13. Millenium Garden

See Item 1.

14. Grounds Maintenance Contract

Having received the details from all three contractors, Councillors discussed the matter, and approval was given for the RFO to award the Grounds Maintenance Contract to John O'Conner.

15. Coronation Community Orchard Grant

Members of the Crowhurst Environment Group recently visited Heron's Folly who will be supplying the organic Sussex variety trees to plant in the Community Orchard and Muriel's Meadow. These should arrive in February or March 2025. The grant deadline is the end of March 2025. The bench for Muriel's Meadow will be installed later in the week. The bench for the picnic area has been delivered and will be installed later when the weather improves. Both are funded as part of the grant.

16. Pavillion/Rec Refurbishment Project

The Recreation Ground Survey has been sent out to all households in Crowhurst. Responses can be made via a link online detailed in the News section of the Crowhurst Parish website, and paper copies can be returned to the letterbox at the Village Hall. The PC are very keen to hear from anyone who

has any fund-raising ideas, or who is willing to offer any general help or advice. Councillors would like to extend thanks to Nettie, our local post lady, for delivering many of the surveys, and to Muriel Scott-Wood and Cllr Plato for delivering the rest. It was agreed that the Clerk would forward the survey to all user groups for completion including Preschool, Short Mat Bowls, the Youth Club, Strolling Group, MUGA group and all other sports groups.

17. Sunday Social Update

Cllr Roller was happy to report that the Sunday Social events have now become an established part of the village calendar. There are some great presentations to look forward to in the New Year, including speakers from the Air Ambulance and Fire and Rescue. Cllr Roller extended her thanks to all those who have supported the initiative, either financially or by offering to speak at one of the sessions.

18. Heritage and Natural Asset Register

See Item 1.

19. Councillor Updates on External Bodies (if any)

Cllr Thomas reported that in response to a planning application that has been submitted, members of the Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC are making an alternative application for the area adjacent to the Discovery Centre/football pitches, to include walks, gardens etc.

Cllr Plato reported that Frances Royston had discovered a spill of oily sludge opposite her house, directly above the drain leading into the Powdermill stream. Frances, who was present at the meeting, explained that she had reported this to the Environment Agency as she was concerned that the stream has been contaminated. Further patches were discovered throughout the village, and it was thought that perhaps one of the dustbin lorries might be leaking oil. The Clerk will contact the Environment Agency to see if any action has been taken.

Tracy Hoad, Crowhurst Flood Warden, had reported to Cllr Plato that the recently built bund has now been extended. The fence on the Rec running alongside the water course will be removed by the Environment Agency and replaced with a type of removable fencing to make it easier to keep this area clear of undergrowth. She was also able to advise that work on the bridge is still being considered, despite this being an expensive project to undertake.

20. Clerk's Report & Information for Councillors:

- 20.1 Acceptance has been received from David Field to speak at our Annual Assembly in April 2025. He will be making a presentation about Dark Skies and lighting.
- 20.2 The Clerk will write to the RVA, the East Sussex External Funder and Community Composting Solutions to invite them to speak to councillors at Parish Council Meetings in the New Year.
- 20.3 Ciaran Day would like to update the website to improve how it looks. He would like to add this to his portfolio of work. The mock up looks very good.
- 20.4 The Clerk has received an email from a resident of Robertsbridge who would like to purchase a copy of a booklet entitled 'Crowhurst, a village in history'.
- 20.5 Graham Maunders from AirS (Rural Housing Enabling Service) has recently contacted the RFO. The Clerk will write to him to give an update on our plans.

21. Any Other Business

There were no other items for discussion.

24. Date of the Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Monday, 20th January 2025** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

Signed by.....