

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on  
**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 7.30pm** in the Village Hall

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

County/district councillors present: Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC

In attendance: Maureen Collins, Parish Clerk and two members of the public.

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### 1. Public Questions

No public questions were asked.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted from Cllr Koorosh Ashrafi and District Cllr Chas Pearce.

### 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, Strolling 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 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024 as a true and correct record.

### 5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

5.1 Additional Storage at the Village Hall – Councillor's did not have a plan available to put to Cllr Thomas in his capacity of Chair of the Village Hall. They will endeavour to have one ready for the next meeting.

5.2 Dog Waste Bin - The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) confirmed the collection costs as £3.45 per week/£179.40 per annum. Councillors unanimously agreed that the RFO should purchase the dog waste bin and invoice Combe Valley CIC as previously minuted.

### 6. Representations from District & County Councillors

County Councillor Kathryn Field reported that the situation regarding adult social care is looking grim. Although the government has given extra funding to East Sussex to help with the care sector (£6.8 million), this will be more than wiped out by increases in the National Living Wage and the forthcoming increase in National Insurance contributions.

There has been lots of conversation around the White Paper calling for legislation to allow decisions to be made by remote meetings. There is a lot of support for this, but not for voting by proxy.

## 7. Town and Country Planning

### 1) To consider the following new Planning Applications and provide comments to Rother District Council.

#### i. RR/2024/1969/P Hyfield Stables, Swainham Lane, Crowhurst, TN38 8ED.

*Proposal: Construction of a dwelling to serve rural business and associated works.*

The applicants attended the meeting to answer questions from councillors. JG had previously visited the applicants and noted that preplanning advice had been taken, and the plans have been looked at favourably. Councillors unanimously agreed to support the application, and the clerk was instructed to submit the following comments.

*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).*

#### ii. RR/2024/2067/P Summerhill, Plough Lane, Crowhurst, TN33 9AW.

*Proposal: New roof with dormers to provide first floor accommodation, and single-storey accommodation.*

Councillors agreed to submit the following comments.

*In line with Crowhurst Parish Council's Dark Skies initiative we would request that if permission is granted our Neighbourhood Plan and Design Guide is referenced with regards to the 5 sky lights and the newly created dormer roof ie no or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32 (v) of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan. The application requests an extension to the footprint of the house, bringing it closer to the boundary of the property. Care should be taken to ensure that this does not impact on any hedges and trees or animal burrows. The dormer roof will result in an increase to the height of the building and care must be taken to ensure that this does not result in direct line of sight into the neighbouring properties of High Bank and Rivendell. We would request that the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide is followed regarding building style and materials used and that any new hard standing is made of porous material to limit run-off.*

#### iii. RR/2024/2158/P 6 Woodland Way, Oakleigh, Crowhurst, TN33 9AP.

*Proposal: Dwelling as an alternative to schemes approved under RR/2022/1538/P AND RR/2023/2440/P*

After discussing the matter, the council agreed to submit the following comments:

*Crowhurst Parish Council neither supports nor objects to this application, but states for the record that if Rother DC are minded granting permission, they expect the district council and building inspectors to enforce all conditions that were imposed when granting the previous permission and any further conditions that are imposed. The Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan also details that there should be no or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32 (v), and any new hard standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5).*

### 2) To receive an update on ongoing planning and enforcement matters.

The clerk updated councillors on the progress of the solar farm proposal. In a reply to an email to Cllr Pearce, James Laibach, Principal Planning Officer confirmed that he is currently waiting for updated consultation responses, following the submission of additional detail in relation to heritage/archaeological and landscape impact.

## **8. Financial Matters**

8.1 The financial report to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 had been circulated and was approved by members.

8.2 The payments report for January 2025 was considered and approved.

8.3 The bank reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chair (GT).

8.4 The final draft of the budget for '25/'26 was approved, and members approved the corresponding precept request. The RFO was asked to complete & submit the request to Rother before the end of the January deadline.

8.5 Training for the clerk at a cost of £75.00 plus VAT was not discussed and retrospective approval will be requested at the next meeting.

## **9. Recreation Ground**

i. Cllr Roller had inspected the playground in December. She noted that there is undermining to the bark pit edging. The surface of the edging is slippery and dangerous. The clerk will add this to the handyman's list. The clerk fixed a sign to the area highlighting the danger, but this was removed soon after by person/s unknown. Cllr Roller also noted that there is exposed wire on the scramble net. This was also noted during Nicola Stell's inspection. The handyman will be asked to check that it is safe and to rectify if required. The folder for the Playground/ Recreation Ground inspection is currently with Cllr Ashrafi. The clerk will contact him to request that the folder is passed to Cllr Laimbeer for the February inspection.

The defibrillator in the telephone box and in the Pavillion had been checked and found to be in good working order. The clerk will enter this information on WEBNOS as this has not been done for some time. Cllr Roller's report drew attention to the poor state of surface of the carpark. Osmonds Transport and Planings had recently recommended Richard Hiscock to do the repair, and the clerk was requested to contact him for a quote.

Following the granting of a new three-year ground's maintenance contract, Cllr Plato and the clerk will be meeting with Graham Cobb and Jason Bunting from John O'Conner to discuss the work schedule moving forward.

ii. Cllrs Goddard and Laimbeer agreed on a date to meet the new handyman. The clerk will make the arrangements.

iii. See 8.1

iv. The new picnic bench funded from the Coronation Community Orchard grant, has been delivered to Cllr Goddard. The handyman will be asked to remove the most damaged picnic bench from the orchard and to install the new one.

## **10. Crowhurst Community MUGA**

i. Cllr Ashrafi was not present at the meeting to give an update on the installation of CCTV at the MUGA.

ii. A quote for a 120m long French drain around the outside of the MUGA had been received from JD Fencing contractors at a cost of £2495.00 plus VAT. After a brief discussion it was agreed that another quote would be obtained by the clerk so that a comparison could be made. Councillors agreed unanimously not to go ahead with the installation of stock netting between the football pitch and the MUGA at the current time.

Councillors unanimously agreed to accept the RFO's recommendation to request the Community Grant from Rother District Council for £18,796.39, which represents 50% of the net project costs for the Tennis Court/MUGA project.

### **11. Neighbourhood Plan Review**

Julia Edwards Senior Planning Officer has sent the examiner, Liz Beth, the NP Review documents submitted for the Reg 16 consultation, along with the representations, and she began the examination on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January. Once she has read through the plans and all the documents, she will send a letter of clarification if she needs more information from either the Parish or District Council. Once Julia Edwards has received this, she will forward it to the Parish Council for a response.

### **12. Annual Parish Assembly 2025**

The Annual Parish Assembly will be held in the Village Hall at 7.30pm on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025. Mr David Field has agreed to give a presentation on Dark Skies and lighting.

### **13. Community Awards 2024**

The Community Award 2024 will be publicised in the February edition of the Crowhurst News, with a village email being sent out at the same time. The deadline for nominations will be 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

### **14. Millenium Garden**

Cllr Plato gave an update regarding the repairs necessary at the Millenium Garden. It is estimated that approximately 45 chestnut hurdles will be required at a cost of £367.50 plus VAT, with labour costs estimated to be £150-£200. After a brief discussion members agreed unanimously to approve the costs, with the proviso that labour costs are capped at £250.

### **15. Highways**

A remote SLR meeting has been arranged for 5<sup>th</sup> March. An in-person meeting may be possible in April if the County Council elections in May do not go ahead. Councillors agreed that the clerk would request an in-person meeting if the elections are postponed.

Liam Reilly, Highways, had been contacted to discuss the damage done to the verge by a subcontractor clearing the drains. He has been advised by the Drainage Supervisor that no further works are required. However, no photographic evidence was submitted as previously agreed. The clerk will contact Highways again to request this is provided and to emphasise that the current state of the verge poses a danger to children and parents walking to and from Crowhurst C of E Primary school.

Contractors have recently repaired the area of exposed ironwork on Plough Lane. Concern has been expressed about the poor quality of the repair, and this will be raised at the next SLR meeting. The Rights of Way team are investigating the drainage issue caused by overgrown foliage in the ditch that runs parallel to the public footpath at the top of Plough Lane. They have created a report reference 44937 and will investigate the location to see what needs to be done.

### **16. Pavillion/Recreation Ground Refurbishment**

The Recreation Ground survey deadline was extended to 20<sup>th</sup> January to allow more time for villagers to make a response, and a reminder was sent out via the village email. A further meeting of the Working Group will take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> January to discuss the responses from the survey and to consider plans for the Pavillion. A proposal for the updating of the playground has been received from Red Lynch and we are waiting for two further quotes from Sovereign Playgrounds and Playdale.

### **17. Sunday Social**

Cllr Roller gave an update on the Sunday Social initiative. There are three sessions left in the current run, on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> February. A meeting will be held following the last session to take stock and discuss plans for Winter 2025.

## 18. Climate Biodiversity Actions and Aspirations

After a brief discussion it was agreed in principle that Crowhurst Parish Council would support Battle Town Councils, Climate and Ecology Sub-committee initiative to **work in partnership with neighbouring parishes**. The clerk was requested to contact Cllr Sue Burton to confirm.

## 19. Heritage and Natural Asset Register

A stalemate has been reached in our efforts to obtain a tree protection order for the yew in St Georges Churchyard that was most damaged by works undertaken at the neighbouring property. We have been advised that there is no process by which we can appeal against the decision not to grant an order as the tree was so damaged that it was not worthy of a TPO. A further inspection of the tree will be made in the Spring and the matter discussed again.

## 20. Climate and Ecological Working Group

A meeting of the Working Group was held on 16<sup>th</sup> January to update on progress towards achieving the Parish Councils Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution aims for 2030. The group have recommended that the Parish Council works towards becoming a Carbon Literate Organisation (CLO). This will require an equivalent of one day of training. Cllr Plato, who has previously completed the training, will contact Community Energy South to see if funded training is available.

## 21. Councillor Updates on External Bodies (if any)

There were none.

## 22. Clerk's Report/Information for Councillors/Correspondence/Future Agenda Items

**1. Devolution** – The clerk had circulated several communications received concerning the Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Priority Programme. East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council have asked the government to approve a proposal for a combined mayoral authority for Sussex with an elected mayor to take the strategic lead on issues including transport, housing, health, environment, public safety, skills and the economy. In return for a newly elected mayor and unitary authority, the Government will then further devolve powers, functions and services to local areas. The decision, which will be made by the Government, will be made by the end of January 2025.

**2, State of the County 2024** – Slides from the engagement meeting of ESCC Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources update had been previously circulated to councillors by the clerk

**3. RVA** - Representatives of the RVA were not at the meeting as expected to give advice on funding options for our Recreation/Playground/Pavillion project. They will be contacted to arrange another date.

**4. Graham Ellis, Composting Solutions** - will give a short presentation to councillors at the February meeting.

**5. Dates for forthcoming meetings** – Councillors agreed the dates of the Parish Council meetings and Annual Parish Assembly.

**6. Nationwide COVID-19 day – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2025** – There will be a nationwide COVID-19 reflection day on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2025

**7. Toilets** - Rother District Council are offering the leasehold interests of 14 blocks of toilets until end of January, when the situation will be examined again. Battle have been offered the lease of Mount Street toilets, but it would cost a great deal of money to get them up to standard. Moving forward they have contacted local shops and restaurants to ask if they are able to offer toilet facilities. The toilets in the Almonry will be made available when the Office is open.

**8. New PSPO in force** – We have been advised that a new Public Spaces Protection Order concerning nuisance behaviour and sleeping, to include Crowhurst, will come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025.

**9. RALC meeting** – The next meeting will take place at Staplecross Village Hall at 2.30pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> January.

**10. VE Day 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025** – The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE day will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Engagement grants of up to £3000 are available from the National Archives for communities connecting with their

archives. Cllr Plato noted that several families in the village have connections to the North Atlantic Convoys.

**12. Correspondence** – The clerk reported on correspondence that has been received this month.

i)**Environment Agency** – Yan Ernst, Catchment Officer, has contacted the Parish Council to discuss the replacement of the fence running alongside the stream in the Recreation Ground. The clerk will contact Mr Ernst to request a meeting.

ii)**Hire of Recreation Ground** – We have received a request to hire the Recreation Ground on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2025 for a 20 over cricket game. The clerk was requested to contact the cricket club to see if they have any objections to this.

iii)**Trees on Chapel Hill** – A resident had contacted the clerk to request information regarding the ownership of the trees on Chapel Hill.

iv)**Rescue Ready** – The clerk had received information regarding free defibrillator training from Rescue Ready. This will be saved for future reference.

v)**Coronation Community Orchard Grant** – Elize Manning has advised that all fruit trees must to be planted by the end of February latest, with all paperwork and invoices received before the end of the same month. Heron’s Folly, who will be supplying the trees had been contacted to request a date for their collection. Cllr Plato advised that the trees will be collected on 31<sup>st</sup> January.

**23. Date of next meeting:**

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed .....

Dated .....