

## **ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 28<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025– A REPORT**

The Annual Assembly took place on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> April in the Village Hall, with over 60 people attending. Many of the clubs and societies which are active in Crowhurst were represented, with some displaying information on tables laid down each side of the Village Hall.

The meeting began with an informative and thought-provoking presentation by Mr. David Field about Dark Skies and Wildlife Friendly Lighting. David highlighted the importance of dark skies for supporting wildlife including bats, moths and wildlife in general. Light pollution presents a significant threat to wildlife, and he outlined the following actions to reduce this: light just the area you need; shield and point lights down; choose less bright bulbs (warm rather than blue light); use timers and sensors; switch off unnecessary lights at nights; remember to close curtains and blinds. Crowhurst already has a Dark Skies Policy and carries out light meter monitoring of light pollution. David encouraged our Parish to achieve international dark skies certification alongside other High Weald Parishes by 2026 by meeting these criteria. Crowhurst is helped by not having street lighting and could achieve certification by bringing local residents on board in working together to reduce light pollution.

Following this the Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr. Geoff Thomas, gave a short report (attached).

The Community Award 2024, given in recognition of work supporting the people of Crowhurst was awarded to Jan Stewart whose tireless support for many village organisations over many years deserves recognition. Pre-school, Arty Farties, St George's, Crowhurst Drama group and Crowhurst school, among others, owe her a huge debt of gratitude. Jan taught at our local school and has, for a number of decades, taken, and still does, an active role in village life. So thank you for the generosity with your time and the kindness you show to others.

After a short break for refreshments presentations were made regarding the following:

**Village Hall** – Richard Day, Treasurer, informed the meeting about the work undertaken to reduce its carbon footprint. The works, funded by Rother District Council, Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund and the Village Hall, saw the installation of a new roof and insulation with Solar Panels and Battery Storage. This along with the earlier provision of double glazing will allow cheaper energy and lead to a reduction in the hire costs for local users.

**Neighbourhood Plan Review** - Chris Davidson and Ros Day informed the meeting regarding the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan Review and Design Guide. The final document will now be considered and hopefully approved by Rother DC at its next

meeting. They highlighted the changes and processes followed. Once approved by RDC it will become part of the local plan which will be an important guide for future development in Crowhurst.

**Village Email** – Steve Royston who administers the village Email explained its function and how it keeps the village informed of events, road closures and general information. Steve encouraged people to sign up themselves and let others know. Contact on **crowhurstcommunity@aol.com**

Representatives of the clubs and societies present were invited to give a short report or summary of their recent activities This included the Crowhurst Environment Group, Village Hall Committee, the Croqueteers, Crowhurst District Horticultural Society, Rainbows and Brownies, the MUGA group, Short Mat Bowls and the Christian Healing Centre. We were very pleased to welcome Edendale Lodge who displayed an array of information and were available to answer any questions. Representatives from Crowhurst C of E Primary School and Crowhurst Community Arts were unable to attend the assembly but sent a report (attached).

County Councillor Kathryn Field gave an update on council activity over the past 12 months and spoke about the uncertainty caused by the proposal from East Sussex County Council and its neighbours for devolution across Sussex.

Cllr Lynda Roller reported on the success of the 2024/25 season Sunday Social sessions. ‘Sunday Socials had a good run this Winter with feedback that it had been a positive experience. It is now established as part of the village calendar. It will run again from November to February this Winter, with light refreshments, good company and talks on a range of topics. It is a project that continues to grow and involve more of the community and thanks to all who have generously become involved in any capacity. We are looking for more volunteers to help run the event on Sundays and we are seeking speakers and support for donations to help with village hall hire and provisions.’

Wine, soft drinks and other refreshments continued to be served once everyone had an opportunity to speak, allowing everyone the opportunity to meet and mingle with other residents.

This event only takes place once a year so look out for next years event which will be held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2026. There is plenty that goes on in Crowhurst, and it is a great chance to find out more!

#### **A REPORT FROM CROWHURST COMMUNITY ARTS FUND**

This year we are delighted to recently welcome two new team members to the committee, Jane Hartnell and Tina Barbary. After many years of devoted service to the Arties, at the end of last year, David Auger took a

well-deserved retirement as our treasurer. Our heartfelt thanks for all his hard work. We are very grateful that this post has been ably filled by Richard Day. Looking back over the last year, our film nights are still proving to be popular. As our regular attendees already know, we have been trialling a new system, which has enabled us to offer free entry. The downside is that we are not allowed to advertise the name of the film on posters etc! Films have included *'The Holdovers'*, *'The Dig'* and *'The Intern'*.

On Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> of June we were grateful to Village Fayre Committee to allow us to use the marquee to run our Crafty Creations Workshop. A free event for local adults and accompanied children to learn a new craft, which included pebble art, mosaic tiles, slate painting and decoupage to name a few. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of November we held a very successful Casino Night. The hall was beautifully decorated and transformed into a into a classy 'Casino'. Everyone had the opportunity to dress up in DJs and evening wear. Blackjack, Roulette and Poker were played with great enthusiasm. Tokens were given out at the start of the evening, and those with the most tokens at the end of the night won prizes. Great fun was had by all. We ended the year with a lovely Carol Concert by candlelight with the beautiful voices of Lucy Ashton and Erin Johnson accompanied by their talented pianist Jeremy Ward. Entry was free and donations were made In aid of 'Warming up the Homeless' in memory of Katie and John Spall. Looking forward, as well as continuing with the popular film nights, we are planning an 'on screen' race night in October. Also in the planning is another concert with Lucy and Erin. Keep an eye out for developments of these and for other possible events.

**Sandra Hunt**

#### **A REPORT FROM CROWHURST C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL – Head, Mr Andrew Jervis**

This has been another successful year for the school. The school continues to be a happy, nurturing environment where we seek to live out our vision for everyone to love God and your neighbour as yourself.

Our staffing has been stable on the whole to this point and our financial position has enabled us to provide enhanced support for our pupils through additional support.

We have recently recruited a new teacher for September who will take over from Mrs Ma in Foxes class. The Governors are currently recruiting for a new Headteacher as I will be leaving at the end of the school year. After what has been 18 wonderful years here, I have decided that it is time for me to pursue new opportunities and challenges.

This decision has not been made lightly, and I have given it considerable thought. I will be taking on a role with the Diocese of Chichester, as a School Effectiveness Officer. In my new role I will continue to impact on the flourishing Church of England school communities by working with Headteachers and teachers of Religious Education.

We continue to focus on learning and ensuring the children have the best possible opportunities to grow in knowledge, skills and as individuals, within the context of our inclusive, Church school ethos.

We continue to receive compliments on the calm atmosphere in school and how attentive and well behaved the children are.

Unfortunately, we were unable to fill our intake into Reception in September 2024, and we still have four places available. We have a further 8 places across the school due to the falling birth rates and less school age families in the village. Please advise any potential families to contact the school office and to visit our lovely village school at their earliest convenience. We are looking forward to welcoming our new intake of children into Reception in September, working closely with their Early Years settings, including those coming up from Crowhurst Pre-school.

We continue to work with our neighbouring schools, particularly Catsfield since our partnership working, but also with wider schools through the Battle Alliance group which also includes Battle and Langton, Bodiam, Etchingham, Ninfield, Netherfield, Salehurst and Staplecross schools. The Friends of the School have continued to work hard on fund raising opportunities as well as events that develop the school community.

We continue to enjoy working with Fr Robert, developing our links with St George's Church and also Crowhurst Christian Healing Centre. We look forward to engaging more in village life and are always open to offers of support whether that is volunteering in classes or as a school governor or building partnerships with other organisations in the village.

**ANDREW JERVIS**

### **Chairpersons Report**

A brief highlight of the Parish Council's year can be summarised as follows:

### **Financial Review**

The Parish is in a good state financially and the accounts created by the RFO have been reviewed and signed off. (On this note I would like to thank our

previous Clerk, Gilly Lowe for her help over the past year as our new clerk takes up the reins and is now fully responsible for supporting the PC). The Parish has not increased its share of the Council Tax this year. We have reserves which will be allocated to potentially expensive future projects currently being planned; refurbishment of Pavillion and children's play area.

### **Achievements**

Although not comprehensive a highlight of some of this year's achievements:

The MUGA was successfully launched last September. A further event is planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Further details are available. It will also give details on how the MUGA will operate.

Funding for the Orchard in the children's play area was secured along with a bench which is accessible. A further bench will be put in Muriel's Meadow. A grant has also been agreed to help with the maintenance of the Millenium Garden.

Climate and Ecological Working Group set the Parish Council the goal of becoming Carbon Literate. To this end Councillors and Clerk have now benefited from training and the PC is hoping to achieve Carbon Literate Certification

Surveys into redeveloping the Tennis Court, Pavillion and Play Area were successfully undertaken and have, and will, inform developments. Thank you to those returning forms.

Various Community Grants have been requested and agreed.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been reviewed and will be considered and hopefully approved by Rother DC at its next meeting.

Sunday Socials had a good run this winter with feedback that it had been a positive experience.

### **Planning and Enforcement**

Various planning applications have been discussed by the Parish Council and

outcome recorded in minutes and online with Rother DC Planning Portal. I would like to thank people for thoughtful and considered contributions when we have discussed more contentious issues. Enforcement issues have been a problem, and several cases have been reported for which we await the outcome.

### **Volunteers**

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all who have worked in a voluntary capacity not only in helping the Parish Council achieve its objectives but for also retaining a vibrant community with many different activities. Thank you. I would also ask that you encourage others to help out!

### **Vacancy**

Related to the issue of volunteers I would like to make a plea. Whilst I appreciate a lot of people here already give of their time we actually need more people to step forward. There are a number of initiatives such as redevelopments of Pavillion and Children's Play Area, a working group to explore feasibility of Community Land Trust to develop affordable housing in our village and local composting service.

We also have a vacancy for the Parish Council and would welcome a new face!

**CLLR GEOFF THOMAS**