

Minutes of the Ordinary of the Parish Council held on
Monday 15th December 2025 at 7.05pm
 in Crowhurst Village Hall, Forewood Lane, Crowhurst.

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Geoff Thomas (Chair), John Goddard, Sue Laimbeer, Sonia Plato and Lynda Roller

In attendance: Maureen Collins, Parish Clerk and Mr Chris Davidson

1.	PUBLIC QUESTIONS: There were no public questions.
2	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor, Kathryn Field and District Councillor, Nicola McLaren.
3.	DECLARATION OF INTERESTS: Received from: Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee Cllr Laimbeer – Annual Fayre Committee, Crowhurst Environment Group and Strolling Group Cllr Plato - Crowhurst Environment Group and Youth Club Cllr Roller - Crowhurst Environment Group
4.	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: The Chairman was authorised to approve and sign the minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Crowhurst Parish Council held on 17 th November 2025 as a true and correct record.
5.	MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED IN THIS AGENDA: 5.1 Councillor Vacancy – The vacancy was advertised in the last edition of the Crowhurst News. Anyone who is interested is very welcome to come along to a meeting to see what is involved and to have an informal chat. Further details can be obtained from the Clerk by emailing clerk@crowhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk .
6.	REPRESENTATIONS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS: District Cllr Nicola McLaren was unable to attend the meeting as she was required at the Rother District Council Full Council meeting. She provided the following update for members. Twenty new food waste collection trucks for Hastings, Rother and Wealden have now been named, and residents are invited to vote for the overall winner. Crowhurst Primary School has submitted an entry and, if chosen, the named truck will visit the school for a celebration. Voting is available via the Rother District Council website. A consultation is underway on proposals to replace the current two-tier system of district and county councils with new unitary authorities. Two proposals are being considered: one from East Sussex County Council working with the district and borough councils, and another from Brighton & Hove City Council. Residents are encouraged to share their views on how they would like local services to be delivered, with full details available on GOV.UK. East Sussex County Council and Citizens Advice continue to offer a free Warm Home Check Service to help households stay warm and reduce energy costs. The service includes telephone advice, practical money-saving tips and, for eligible households, a home visit. Further information is available at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/keepwarm or by calling 0800 464 7307.

	County Councillor Kathryn Field was unable to attend the meeting as she was also required at the Rother District Council Full Council meeting. She reported that to date officers see no route to a balanced budget.
7.	<p>TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING</p> <p>1)To consider the following planning application and provide comments to Rother District Council: RR/2025/1959/HOU Fordlands Farm, Crowhurst Road, Catsfield, TN33 9BT <i>Proposal: Single storey rear extension and creation of a cellar, with improved patio and steps.</i> Comments by 23rd December 2025.</p> <p>Cllr Sonia Plato visited Fordlands Farm. The property comprises approximately 130 acres, including a mature orchard. The owner outlined plans to further develop the site, including the expansion of an existing vine nursery. A key element of the proposal is an increase in storage capacity to support the growing business. Neighbouring properties have raised no objections, and the proposed extension would not overlook any nearby homes. Access for construction vehicles will need careful consideration, as Catsfield Road is narrow; and this is likely to be addressed through planning conditions.</p> <p>After a brief discussion, councillors agreed to support the application. If Rother District Council is minded to approve the application, they ask that the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan should be referenced - namely that there is no or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32 (v), and that any new hard standing is made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5) and that the building style should adhere to our Design Guide.</p>
8.	<p>FINANCIAL MATTERS:</p> <p>8.1 The financial report to 30th November 2025 had been circulated and was approved by members.</p> <p>8.2 The payments report for December 2025 was considered and approved.</p> <p>8.3 The bank reconciliation to 30th November 2025 had been circulated. This was approved by members and signed by the Chair (GT).</p> <p>8.4 The first draft of the budget was discussed by councillors. After some discussion the clerk was asked to provide further information regarding Recreation Ground and Pavilion costs and to re-examine the proposed increases to Rec User group fees and Recreation Ground hourly charges.</p> <p>8.5 Councillors agreed to the clerk's request to be paid 18.5 hours overtime for training hours over the past four months.</p> <p>8.6 Councillors approved a payment of £300 to Mr. Tillmann Lenz for services undertaken in relation to the Pavilion.</p> <p>8.7 Councillors approved a payment of £105 to Ciaran Day for website services.</p>
9.	<p>RECREATION GROUND:</p> <p>9.1 Cllr Thomas carried out this month's playground inspection. He noted that the rocker bike in the Playground still requires a repair to the handlebars. The clerk will chase this with the handyman. A new latch is required to the gate to the car park, and to the playground. In addition, one of the gates could do with replacing. The five-a-side goals seemed to be unlocked and the bench in the MUGA needs to be removed as it could pose a safety risk when games are being played.</p> <p>9.2 Councillors agreed to the purchase of four large 'no dogs' signs for the Recreation Ground. The clerk will do some research into what is available and will report back to the next meeting.</p> <p>9.3 A quote for £1127 was received from Colin Ford for 6 new bollard footing pads, and to install the new barrier gate.</p>
10.	<p>HOUSING DEVELOPMENT MEETING</p> <p>The meeting held on Friday 28 November was the second Rother-led housing development event, following the initial session in January 2025. The purpose of this meeting was to gather ideas and perspectives from a broad mix of attendees, including developers and community representatives and a survey to look for potential sites will begin in January 2026. Rother District Council's new annual target is to deliver an additional 495 homes—more than double the previous requirement, this is still only around half of current delivery. Government targets for the area have risen from 727 homes per year to 912.</p>

	<p>Public consultation on the Local Plan will run until early summer, after which the plan will move to examination. All rejected sites will be reviewed as part of this process. The new Local Plan is expected to be adopted in 2027. Local developers reported that additional funding is becoming available, but it takes time to reach local level. Developers tend to favour schemes with a significant proportion of affordable housing, as this provides more secure income. Homes England holds government funding for affordable housing; over a ten-year programme, approximately £39 million is allocated nationally to support around 30,000 homes. Two key funding streams were highlighted: the Social and Affordable Homes Programme and the National Homes Delivery Plan, which supports schemes with high infrastructure costs. Brian Coleman, representing a housing association developer, noted strong competition for allocations and emphasised the value of clear, well-prepared plans. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) continues to be viewed by developers as an unwelcome additional cost. Utilities were a major topic of discussion, with a shared view that there should be more proactive engagement with utility companies at the planning stage. It was suggested that local Neighbourhood Plan groups meet more regularly, particularly on shared issues such as Solar Farms. District Councillor Sue Prochak offered strong recognition of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan and the Solar Farm work, describing the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan as the best in the Rother district and something like the Crowhurst Design Guide was proposed as a way to improve the quality of future development. Graham Quinell suggested that the next housing event should be held in Crowhurst.</p> <p>Councillor Thomas extends his thanks to Chris Davidson, Ros Day and Councillor Plato for attending the meeting. Cllr Plato reinforced the need to emphasise the validity and importance of the NP within the village and Chris Davidson agreed to prepare a report for inclusion in the Crowhurst News.</p> <p>Following Mr. Davidson's report, Cllr Thomas asked whether the additional 'barns' site had been added. It was confirmed that the site had been added and that it will be treated as a separate site. Cllr Thomas also asked whether the examiner would be local or national? Mr. Davidson was unsure but noted that there is likely to be a list of qualified examiners. Cllr Plato reported that at the recent Stakeholder meeting for the Combe Valley Way Countryside Park, Dean Morrison had offered to revisit the previously rejected footpath rerouting.</p>
11.	<p>PARISH COUNCIL REVIEWS TO SET PRIORITIES</p> <p>The Parish Council Review will take place on 12 January 2026 in The Hall, The Almonry, Battle, with Mr. Trevor Lego, CEO of the East Sussex Association of Local Council's acting as facilitator. Topics for inclusion to cover the Neighbourhood Plan, priorities for the next one to two years, responsibilities within the Council, representation at external meetings, technology and GDPR responsibilities, and a reflective review of past work to inform future planning. The Council will also consider how to define success and a review of progress on the Solar Farm.</p>
12.	<p>EMERGENCY AND RESILIENCE PLAN</p> <p>The Emergency Warden list has been updated, and all wardens have been fully briefed on their responsibilities. The existing plan has also been reinforced to residents through an article in <i>Crowhurst News</i> and via a village-wide email.</p>
13.	<p>BIODIVERSITY AUDIT</p> <p>Councillors noted the receipt of the new Biodiversity Audit from Dr. John Feltwell. This will be available via the Parish Council website. The Parish Council gave thanks to Dr John Feltwell for his continued support of the parish's environmental work.</p>
14.	<p>PAVILION AND PLAYGROUND REFURBISHMENT PROJECTS</p> <p>The next Pavilion Working Group meeting will take place on Monday, 14th January 2026 at 6.30pm. The meeting will be held in The Plough Inn.</p> <p>The meeting to establish a Playground Refurbishment Working Group has been deferred until January.</p>
15.	<p>COUNCILLOR UPDATES ON EXTERNAL BODIES (IF ANY):</p> <p>Cllr Plato gave an update on the CEG station flowerbed project with 1066 Railways Partnership Trust. Local residents, Ian Spencer and Michael Gale have put together planting plans, including scented plants for the new flowerbeds. An application for funding will be submitted to Kana</p>

	<p>Ingestion at the Partnership. At the recent Combe Valley Stakeholder meeting, it was agreed to make a funding submission to the Sussex Ornithological Society for the further removal of the carp from Crowhurst Flood Attenuation pond with the aim of reducing carp numbers over time to allow wildlife to return. It was noted that East Sussex County Council, who own the land and the pond, consider the site to be unsuitable for fish as well as illegal and any activity around the pond is considered as trespass. Options are being explored to make the lake less accessible and 'no fishing' signs are being considered.</p> <p>Cllr Thomas reported that he had attended his first ESALC Board meeting. He advised that the Mayoral elections have been postponed to 2028 but that all other aspects of reorganization are going ahead as planned. Positive relations have been developed between ESCC and WSCC and ESALC and WSALC which will support ongoing discussions. This will help to ensure that smaller parish councils retain a strong voice. Cllr Thomas and Cllr Plato had received an invitation to attend the next Parishes Climate and Ecology meeting which will take place in January.</p>
16.	<p>CLERK'S REPORT AND INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS</p> <p>18.1 The Clerk has received a quote from Colin Ford to install the new barrier gate and for new concrete bases for the first five bollard lights on the Recreation Ground. She has asked Mr Ford to split the quote to show the prices separately, as we are likely to install the barrier gate before undertaking work on the bollard lights</p> <p>18.2 The Environment Agency have written to confirm that they will undertake work on the fencing running alongside the stream on the Recreation Ground to replace the current mesh with one with a smaller hole dimension.</p> <p>18.3 A complaint was received from a resident following recent emergency works on the highway which resulted in cars being directed away from both entry points into the village. This was passed to ESCC Highways department.</p> <p>18.4 The Clerk received a report from a resident of the poor state of the road surface along the length of Swainham Lane. A pothole case request has been raised by the ESCC Highways department.</p> <p>18.5 The second public consultation on the Rother draft Local Plan will begin early in 2026 and will last for 8 weeks.</p>
17.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>Cllr Roller advised that Sunday Socials will resume on January 11th 2026, with further sessions taking place on the 18th and 25th of January.</p> <p>Cllr Laimbeer reported that there had been further activity at Lower Wilting with more soil being added to that already dumped at the site.</p>
18.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The next ordinary meeting will be held on Monday 19th January 2026 at 7.05pm in the Village Hall.</p>

Signed

Dated