



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on

Monday 21st September 2026 at 7.05pm

Crowhurst Village Hall, Forewood Lane, Crowhurst.

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

District/County Councillors present: None

In attendance: Maureen Collins, Parish Clerk, and one member of the public.

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were raised by members of the public.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Rivett, District Cllr Nicola McLaren and County Cllr Kathryn Field.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations were received as follows:

- Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee
- Cllr Roller – Crowhurst Environment Group
- Cllr Plato – Crowhurst Environment Group, Youth Club, Community Solar Farm Group
- Cllr Laimbeer – Crowhurst Environment Group

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on **20th July 2026** were approved as a true and correct record. The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED IN THIS AGENDA

The Clerk's update on matters arising (Appendix 1) was noted.

6. REPRESENTATIONS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

i. Cllr McLaren was unable to attend the meeting as she was required at a Full Council meeting of Rother District Council. She provided a written report, which was noted.

She advised that the new National Scheme of Delegation for planning will come into effect on 31 October 2026, with practical implications already beginning to apply in Rother. RALC has arranged a briefing session with Mike Hughes, Head of Planning, and Cllr McLaren offered to discuss the changes with the Parish Council at its next meeting if helpful.

On Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), she reported that following Angela Rayner's recent statement indicating that LGR proposals for several areas, including East Sussex, are currently "paused", the latest position is that RDC elections will proceed in May 2027. Further clarification is expected in due course.

She confirmed that the Rother Pre-submission Local Plan was being considered by Full Council this evening. Subject to approval, it will proceed to Regulation 19 consultation, and she will notify the Parish Council when this opens. She highlighted that the nationally pioneering Rights of Trees motion passed by Rother in September 2025 has now been embedded within the Local Plan, strengthening its application within planning policy.

Cllr McLaren also drew attention to a new policy brought forward by Cllr Field relating to the design of new developments to prevent vehicles exceeding 20mph, included within Appendix A of the Full Council papers.

ii. Cllr Field was unable to attend the meeting as she was required at the Full Council meeting of Rother District Council. She submitted a written report, which was noted.

She advised that August had been a relatively quiet month for the County Council but highlighted the recent issues surrounding **children's summer food vouchers**, noting that the impact of this is due to be considered by **People Scrutiny**.

Cllr Field also reported that the County Council has begun its early preparation work for the **2027/28 budget**, which is expected to be challenging.

RESOLVED: Councillors noted the reports.

7. TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

1. No applications had been received this month

2. Councillors noted the applications reviewed during the summer recess and confirmed that comments had already been submitted by the Clerk.

i) **RR/2026/0850/FULL – Hill Croft Farm, Royal Oak Lane** Replacement of existing livestock barn with a livestock barn.

ii) **RR/2026/0673/HOU – Shirleys, Sandroek Hill** Conversion of attached garage into kitchen, internal reconfiguration, roof conversion with dormer, and new permeable parking.

RESOLVED: All planning comments were agreed as recorded.

The Chair varied the order of business and took Item 10 (Pavilion Refurbishment Project) immediately after Item 7 to allow the member of the public presenting the report to leave the meeting.

8. PAVILION REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

Councillors received an update from Mr Gareth Bright following the meeting held on **15th September 2026**.

The Group had reviewed the structural survey report received from Hawkins & Hawkins. The report indicates that the structure of the Pavilion is likely to be costly to repair and to bring up to current standards, and as a result **some of the earlier design concepts prepared by the architect may no longer be viable**.

The architect, **Mr Tillmann Lenz**, is now exploring the use of **prefabricated and pre-designed elements** within the construction process as a potentially more feasible approach. He has written to Mr Hawkins seeking clarification on several points raised in the structural report.

Councillors agreed that, should it be necessary to obtain further professional advice from Mr Hawkins, **the Pavilion Refurbishment Group may incur costs of up to £500** for this purpose.

The update was noted and next steps will be considered as further information becomes available.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS

i. The financial reports to **31st July and 31st August 2026**, including receipts and payments summaries, were noted.

ii. The payments reports for **August and September 2026** were approved.

iii. The bank reconciliations to **31st July and 31st August 2026**, together with supporting bank statements, were agreed.

iv. Councillors agreed to commission an internal audit for 2026/27 and authorised the Clerk to liaise with the internal auditor, Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd.

v. The retrospective payment of **£53.29** for stationery was approved.

vi. The additional back pay of **£128.96** and the new pay rate of **£19.47 per hour** were noted and approved.

vii. The Clerk was authorised to set up a direct debit for monthly grounds maintenance payments to John O'Conner.

viii. The price increase imposed by JM Waste from 1 August 2026 was noted.

ix. The purchase of a **hard drive (£109.00)** and a **mobile phone** for Parish Council use was approved.

x. Councillors approved the cancellation of BT Cloud Works.

xi. Receipt of the **Precept payment of £18,656.74**, which was credited to the bank account on the 28th August 2026, was noted.

xii. Councillors agreed that Edge IT be authorised to remove historical data in line with the Data Retention Policy.

RESOLVED: All items were agreed or approved as recorded.

10. RECREATION GROUND

i. Councillors received the monthly playground/defibrillator inspection update and noted the weekly reports.

ii. The retrospective approval of the annual playground inspection by The Playground Inspection Co. at **£190 + VAT** was agreed. This is due to take place sometime in October.

iii. Councillors noted that Crowhurst Football Club's adult second team has folded and will not require the Recreation Ground for the 2026/27 season.

iv. Councillors considered the request to lay a hedge on the Recreation Ground and agreed actions as discussed. This is likely to take place in December, after the clearing of the gully.

v. The date of the next Rec Users meeting—**Monday 26th October at 6.30pm**—was noted.

vi. Councillors discussed the annual clearing of the gully and agreed actions. The clerk will arrange for Cllr Goddard to meet with Colin Ford to discuss.

Additionally, Councillors noted that several areas of the car park surface are becoming worn again, with a couple of dips appearing in the chippings. It was agreed that the

Council will review the condition in the new year with a view to arranging remedial work in February/March.

Councillors noted that several of the tree supports in the orchard have become wobbly, and that one of the swings is currently out of action due to a missing nut. Cllr Goddard offered to carry out the necessary repairs, and councillors thanked him for taking this on.

RESOLVED: All items were noted and actions agreed as recorded.

11. GRANT REQUEST

Members considered a grant request from the Crowhurst Environment Group to support payment of the group's annual insurance premium.

At the start of the meeting, **three of the five councillors present declared an interest** in the Crowhurst Environment Group. As the council is required to have **three eligible councillors present** for the meeting to remain quorate for decision-making, the Chair asked **Cllr Sonia Plato (Vice Chair)** to leave the meeting for this item due to her role on the Group's committee.

The **Monitoring Officer had advised that the Chair could grant a dispensation** to the remaining councillors who had declared an interest, enabling them to **participate in the discussion and vote** so that the council could lawfully transact this item of business.

With the dispensation in place, the council **approved unanimously** a grant of **£493.27** to the Crowhurst Environment Group to meet the cost of their annual insurance premium.

RESOLVED: The grant request was approved.

12. CROWHURST STATION MURAL

Members received an update on the Crowhurst Station Mural Project. The project is being led by Ms Kanna Ingleson, Community Rail Officer for the 1066 Line within the South East Communities Rail Partnership (SCRIP), and is to be funded through the Community Rail Development Fund.

SCRIP partners with train operators, councils, schools and volunteer groups to improve local stations, promote sustainability and strengthen links between communities and the rail network. The total cost of the mural project is approximately £7,593 including VAT.

It was resolved that the Parish Council would grant £500 under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 as part of the match-funding package required.

In addition, the Parish Council agreed to cover the cost of producing a commemorative pictorial booklet of the mural. The booklet will comprise 50 copies of a 21 × 21 cm wire-bound publication at a cost of £344.50.

RESOLVED: The Section 137 grant was approved. Funding for the booklet was agreed, and the chosen option (A) was approved.

13. REGISTER OF INTEREST FORMS

Councillors received an update on publication of Register of Interest forms. Members agreed that councillor signatures should be redacted to protect against potential fraud.

RESOLVED: Signatures will be redacted as agreed.

14. COUNCILLOR UPDATES ON EXTERNAL BODIES

Cllr Thomas, in his capacity as Chair of the Village Hall Committee, reported that works have been completed to create a meeting room at the rear of the hall. The space is now looking very tidy and will provide a useful additional facility.

RESOLVED: All updates were noted and actions agreed as recorded.

15. CLERK'S REPORT & INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS

The Clerk's Report and Correspondence were **received and noted**.

Councillors confirmed that attendance for the **Annual Parish Conference** would be arranged once availability was known. It was noted that **Ros Day** will complete the **NALC Neighbourhood Plan Survey** on behalf of the Parish Council. The update regarding the **RDC Housing Development Event** was noted; clarification on attendee limits is awaited. Details of the **Rother Community Grants Scheme** and **Battle Big Green Day** were noted. Councillors noted the arrangements for the **ESALC Conference** and the date of the first **Budget Setting Meeting** for 2027/28. The forthcoming **Powdermill Stream clearance** was noted. The introduction of the **National Scheme of Delegation – Planning Functions** was noted, together with the associated briefing session. It was noted that **Part Two of the Business Plan** will be arranged during late 2026. The Clerk advised that **Local Election costs for May 2027** will be included within the budget process. The Clerk reported attendance at **WCAG 2.2 accessibility training** and advised that the Parish Council's website will require an upgrade to ensure compliance; the Accessibility Statement must also be updated annually. Councillors noted the date of the **Councillor Responsibilities meeting**. The invitation from **St George's Church** to participate in the Christmas Tree Festival was received for consideration

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr Roller asked that residents be considerate when lighting bonfires, noting that although legislation exists, individuals should remain mindful of the impact on neighbours.

Concerns regarding the condition of the supports on the wires attached to the 1066 Yew were raised by qualified individuals. As the tree is on land owned by St Georges church, the Clerk will write to them to ask whether they would like to approach the Parish Council for a grant towards any necessary works.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on **Monday 19th October 2026 at 7.05pm** in the Village Hall.

Signed:

Dated: