Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 19th October 2026 at 7.05pm
Crowhurst Village Hall, Forewood Lane, Crowhurst.

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

District/County Councillors present: County Cllr Kathryn Field and District Councillor Nicola McLaren

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

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1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were raised.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Geoff Thomas (Chair)

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations were received as follows:

- 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 **Monday, 21st September 2026** were approved as a true and correct record. The Vice Chair was authorised to sign the minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED IN THIS AGENDA

Councillor Vacancy

The Clerk reported that the councillor vacancies continue to be advertised on the Parish Council noticeboard and in the *Crowhurst News*. Councillors noted the update.

Recreation Ground Tree Survey

Councillors Plato and Goddard met with the Clerk to discuss the Tree Survey. Work is ongoing to identify the owners of land adjoining the Recreation Ground where a number

of trees in poor condition are located, to enable the relevant landowners to be notified. Councillors noted the progress made.

Hedge Laying on the Recreation Ground

The Clerk reported that hedge laying on the Recreation Ground is scheduled to take place between **7 and 12 December 2026**, weather permitting. The work will be led by **John French** using traditional hedge-laying techniques.

Preparatory work will be undertaken during the preceding week to ensure the site is ready for the project. Volunteers will be welcome to attend and assist with the work, providing an opportunity to learn traditional hedge-laying techniques.

Councillors noted the update.

6. REPRESENTATIONS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

i. District Councillor Nicola McLaren

ii. County Councillor Kathryn Field

District Councillor's Report

Councillors noted that the consultation on the draft Rother Local Plan remains open until 24 November 2026. The revised Plan includes proposals relating to affordable housing, climate-friendly development, environmental protection and infrastructure investment. It was further noted that the Plan contains references to the Rights of Trees and Rights of Rivers, which had been initiated by Crowhurst Parish Council.

Councillors noted that Rother District Council has written to the Minister for Housing and Planning expressing concerns regarding the proposed National Scheme of Delegation and its potential impact on the role of elected councillors in determining planning applications.

Councillors received an update on the financial challenges facing local government. It was noted that increasing statutory service demands, particularly in relation to temporary accommodation, continue to place pressure on council finances. Cabinet will consider budget proposals later in October, following which a public consultation on savings proposals is expected to take place during November and December.

Councillors were advised that Councillor McLaren has taken on a new Cabinet portfolio covering Environment, the Joint Waste Contract, Licensing and Climate Strategy. As a result, she will no longer serve on the Planning Committee or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

County Councillor's Report

County Councillor Kathryn Field reported that a proposal to introduce a blanket 30mph default speed limit for villages, hamlets and other small settlements across East Sussex had been considered by East Sussex County Council. The proposal does not automatically introduce new 30mph limits. Instead, it asks the council's scrutiny committee to examine the idea further.

A Green Party motion seeking for East Sussex to be designated a 'Safe Place' was considered by East Sussex County Council but was not carried.

An update was provided on Local Government Reorganisation. Questions were raised regarding the costs associated with reorganisation and whether these costs would be reimbursed by Central Government. It was noted that reimbursement is not currently expected. It was further reported that East Sussex County Council has sought a Judicial Review in relation to the reorganisation proposals.
Councillor Field reported that she had requested information on any additional costs incurred by East Sussex County Council as a result of its Climate Emergency commitments.
Resolved: To note the District and County Councillor reports.

7. TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

7.1 RR/2026/1065/HOU – The Pump House, Breadsell Lane, Crowhurst, TN38 8EB

Erection of rear extension with pitched and flat roof, with replacement glazing, frames and roof to existing conservatories and internal alterations.
Councillors considered an application relating to alterations to a dwelling formed from two previously joined cottages. The proposed works include the replacement of windows and roofs of existing conservatories.
Councillors noted that the proposals would not result in overlooking of neighbouring properties and would have no significant impact on neighbouring amenity.
Resolved: To support the application. Councillors requested that the Clerk submit the following comments to the Local Planning Authority:
"The Parish Council supports the application but requests that any external lighting is designed in accordance with the Parish Council's Dark Skies policy. There should be no upward-facing lighting and any roof lights should incorporate suitable measures to minimise light spill and preserve the dark skies of the area."
All councillors present supported the application.

7.2 RR/2026/1200/FULL – Upper Wilting Farm, Crowhurst Road, Crowhurst, TN38 8EG

Proposed siting of five shepherd huts for holiday purposes including associated works.
The Clerk advised that Rother District Council had agreed to extend the consultation period until **18 November 2026** to allow the application to be considered at the next meeting of the Parish Council.
Councillors noted the extension

8. GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

i. The financial report to **30 September 2026** was received together with the September bank statements.
ii. The payments report for **October 2026** was considered.
iii. The bank reconciliation to **30 September 2026** was reviewed together with the summary of payments and receipts.
iv. Receipt of the External Auditor's Report and Certificate for the year ended 31 March 2026 was noted.
v. Payment of the PKF Littlejohn external audit invoice **(£315 plus VAT)** was noted.

vi. Councillors reviewed the independence and competence of the Council's appointed Internal Auditor, **Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd**, in accordance with paragraphs 4.9 to 4.11 of the *JPAG Practitioners' Guide*.
Councillors confirmed that the Internal Auditor is independent of the management of the Council's financial controls and procedures, has no conflicts of interest with the Council and does not provide any management or financial assistance to the Council.
Councillors further confirmed that **Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd**, as specialist local authority internal auditors, possesses the appropriate experience and competence to undertake the Council's internal audit.
Resolved: That the Council is satisfied that **Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd** remains independent and competent to carry out the Council's internal audit function and that the annual review required by paragraph 4.11 of the *JPAG Practitioners' Guide* has been completed.
vii. Councillors considered renewal of the Council's insurance policy with Zurich Municipal for 2026/27 at a premium of **£1,128.30 plus VAT**.
Resolved: To renew the Council's insurance policy with Zurich Municipal for 2026/27 at a premium of £1,128.30 plus VAT and to authorise payment.
viii. Consideration of a quotation for the purchase of a Network Attached Storage (NAS) device for the backup of the Clerk's computer and Council electronic records was deferred until the next meeting.
ix. Councillors agreed that the Clerk may determine the most appropriate and accessible method of receiving copies of the electoral register and advise Rother District Council accordingly.
Resolved: All items were noted, agreed as recorded.

9. RECREATION GROUND

i. Councillor Paula Rivett reported on her monthly playground and defibrillator inspection. Most of the matters identified were consistent with those already highlighted by Nicola Stell during her regular weekly inspections. Councillor Rivett noted that the toddler swings were particularly dirty and recommended that they be washed down.
The Clerk met with Nicola Stell on the morning of the meeting to carry out a joint inspection of the pavilion, playground and Recreation Ground in order to compile a definitive list of maintenance tasks to be passed to the handyman.
During the inspection, it was noted that the light fitting in the away changing room was defective. Councillors agreed that the Clerk be authorised to engage an electrician to replace the fitting. The electrician will also be asked to replace the damaged light fitting cover in the former telephone kiosk adjacent to The Plough, which houses the community defibrillator.
It was also noted that the hedge on the left-hand side of the path leading to the pavilion requires cutting back. It was agreed that Nick Stell be approached to undertake this work.

The redecoration of the kitchen wall within the pavilion was considered and deferred until the spring.

ii. The quotation received from Colin Ford for works to clear the gully was considered by councillors. It was agreed that additional quotations would be sought following the completion of the hedge-laying works scheduled for December, as this will provide improved access to the gully and enable a more accurate assessment of the works required.

iii. Councillor Goddard provided an update on the fault affecting the Recreation Ground path lighting. It was reported that the electrical supply trips when the path lights are activated and, as a precautionary measure, the lighting has been isolated pending further investigation. The likely cause of the fault is believed to be water ingress affecting a number of the lighting units.

Following discussion, councillors agreed that the priority should be to restore a safe and functional lighting system. It was proposed that any defective lighting units be removed and that every second light along the path be repaired and brought back into service. Councillors agreed that a qualified electrician would be required to undertake the investigation and remedial works.

Resolved: To engage **Rise Electrical** to undertake investigations and repairs to the Recreation Ground path lighting, with expenditure initially approved up to **£400** and subsequently increased to **£650** following consultation with councillors by email to enable the necessary works to be completed.

10. PAVILION REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

Councillor Plato reported that a second meeting with Mr Hawkins had been postponed due to Mr Hawkins being unwell. A meeting has now been arranged for **4 November 2026** between Councillor Plato, Mr Tillmann-Lenz and Mr Hawkins to discuss the project and consider the next steps.

Councillors noted the update and agreed to receive a further report following the meeting.

11. SUNDAY SOCIAL UPDATE

Councillors received an update on the Sunday Social. It was reported that sufficient funding is in place to operate the initiative throughout the coming winter, although additional fundraising will be required to support it next winter. The Sunday Social will run from **11.30am to 3.00pm** during **January** and **February** 2027.

Councillors noted that two forthcoming sessions remain without speakers and that efforts are ongoing to secure suitable volunteers.

An initiative called **Tools on a Mission**, led by Chris Parkinson, will take place during one of the Sunday Social sessions. Residents will be invited to bring unwanted or broken tools, which will be repaired where possible and sent for use in developing countries. A spectacles collection box will also be available at all sessions.

It was noted that the village post lady will distribute flyers and that Councillor Roller will arrange for a notice to be placed in the *Crowhurst News*. Volunteers continue to be welcomed and encouraged to support the project.
Councillors noted the update.

12. STATION MURAL PROJECT

Councillors received an update on the project. It was reported that nearly 30 portraits have now been completed by Emily John.
Two portrait sessions have taken place at the Christian Healing Centre and one session has been held in the Church Room, with a further session still to take place.
Councillors were advised that two volunteer sessions will be held on **2 November 2026** and **9 November 2026** to clean and prepare the panels. (Cleaning sessions have subsequently been postponed as awaiting final go ahead from Station Manager). It was also reported that a recent meeting held in the Village Hall had been very successful and that a number of activities are continuing to be planned as the project progresses. A celebration event is planned at the conclusion of the project to mark its completion and showcase the finished work.
Councillors noted the update.

13. INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY APPLICATION

Councillors received an update on the International Dark Sky application. It was reported that the pre-application stage had been completed and that the application fee would be US$250, which would also cover the first year of the application. This would be followed by an annual fee of US$100 thereafter, equivalent to approximately £80 per year at current exchange rates.
It was noted that the Environment Group will prepare the initial application, to be formally submitted by the parish council, including the compilation of supporting case studies and ongoing evidence of improvements towards dark skies achieved.
Councillor Plato declared a personal interest in this item and took no part in the discussion or decision.
Resolved: To proceed with the International Dark Sky application and to authorise payment of the relevant application fees.
Councillors were also advised of forthcoming Dark Skies events organised by CEG and funded by the Sussex Lund. On **11 November 2026**, Doug Edworthy and the Sidewalk Astronomers will host a Dark Skies Family Stargazing event on the Recreation Ground, including a guided Youth Club stargazing walk. A further Dark Skies walk open to all, will take place on **14 November 2026 from 6.30pm to 9.00pm**.
In addition, Sam Nicolas has funded a workshop entitled *Making Reflections in the Sky* with the Youth Club and Sunday Social on activities connected with the Dark Skies initiative.
Councillors noted the update and welcomed the continued community engagement supporting the Parish Council's ambition to become a Dark Skies Village.

14. GRANT REQUEST

Councillors considered the grant request for £500 from Air Ambulance Charity Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS).

Resolved: To award a Section 137 grant of **£250** to Air Ambulance Charity Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS).

15. CROWHURST SOCIETY AND QUARRY WOOD

Councillors discussed future governance arrangements and community support for Quarry Wood.

It was noted that the Crowhurst Society, which manages Quarry Wood, is experiencing difficulties in maintaining its current trustee base, and consideration is therefore being given to how it can be supported to continue its work.

A joint meeting of the Parish Council and the Crowhurst Society has been arranged for **21 November 2026 at 10.00am in the Village Hall** to discuss the future of Quarry Wood and options for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the charity.

Councillors agreed that new trustees should be encouraged to come forward and become involved in the management of the Society.

It was agreed that a flyer would be distributed in advance of the meeting to raise awareness and encourage community participation.

Councillors were advised that the Crowhurst Society could approach the Parish Council for a grant towards its annual insurance costs should this be considered helpful.

Resolved: To support the promotion of the meeting on 21 November 2026 through the distribution of a village flyer encouraging potential trustees to come forward.

Councillors noted the update and looked forward to the forthcoming meeting.

16. CROWHURST COMMUNITY SOLAR FARM

Joel Burnham attended the meeting on behalf of the Crowhurst Community Solar Farm Project and provided an update on progress to date.

Councillors were reminded that the project originated from work undertaken by the Warmer Crowhurst group to address fuel poverty within the village while also supporting the generation of renewable energy through a community-led initiative.

Councillors were advised that further technical and feasibility work is being undertaken, together with discussions with relevant organisations and utility providers, to establish the most appropriate way forward. Professional advice will be obtained where necessary to support the next stages of the project.

Councillors welcomed the update and noted that the project team would provide further information as proposals develop.

17. TREES ON CHAPEL HILL

Councillors received an update regarding the recent tree fall at Chapel Hill, the subsequent road closures and concerns raised by residents regarding other trees in the area affected by ash dieback.

It was noted that East Sussex Highways had previously advised that their powers were limited to requesting that the landowner remove any dangerous trees and that the matter had been referred to the relevant enforcement team.
Councillors expressed concern regarding the ongoing situation and the impact on residents.
Resolved: That the Clerk write to East Sussex Highways to request an update on the current position, including any progress made following the referral to enforcement, and report any response received back to the Council.

18. COUNCILLOR UPDATES ON EXTERNAL BODIES

No updates were received from councillors in relation to external bodies and no associated actions were identified.
Councillors noted the position.

19. CLERK'S REPORT AND INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS

The Clerk's Report, previously circulated to councillors, was received and noted.
Councillors noted the update regarding Lower Wilting. It was reported that the freeholder continues to deal with the remediation of harm caused by waste operators and the tenant farmer as a priority and is liaising with the Environment Agency.
The forthcoming Recreation Ground Users' Meeting on 26 October 2026 was noted, together with the limited response received from user groups regarding attendance.
An update was received regarding the tree works on Station Road, which are scheduled to take place during the October half-term period.
Councillors noted that discussions remain ongoing with UK Power Networks regarding the timing of works on the Recreation Ground and the provision of a temporary accessible route during the works.
A request for additional dog waste bins within the village was considered. It was noted that the Clerk will investigate the costs of providing and servicing additional bins and report back to a future meeting. The matter will be considered as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process.
The condition of the Ballards Hill fingerpost sign was discussed. Councillors noted that East Sussex County Council would only replace the sign with a standard metal post and that restoration of the existing fingerpost would be the responsibility of the Parish Council. No further action was agreed at this stage.
Councillors noted that a Business Plan Working Group meeting has been arranged for **17 November 2026** at Edendale Lodge to consider the next phase of the Council's Business Plan.
The Clerk reported that, despite three visits by the contractor, the pavilion sewage tank remains unemptied. Councillors noted that the Clerk is continuing to pursue the matter and is awaiting confirmation of a completion date.
Councillors were reminded to confirm attendance or submit apologies for the ESALC Conference.

Councillors also noted that Rother District Council will be holding a Housing Event on **27 November 2026**.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business raised that had not been considered elsewhere on the agenda.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Councillors noted that the next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **16 November 2026 at 7.05pm in the Village Hall**.

Signed .....

Dated .....