



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 16th January 2022 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Ros Day (RD), Sonia Plato (SP), Geoff Thomas (GT), Lynda Roller (LR) and John Goddard (JG).

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk

1. Public Questions

There were no members of the public. A resident had sent a copy email to the Chairman of a letter he had sent to ESCC Highways department about the numerous blocked drains in the village. SP further reported the flooding hotspots. RD said that individual residents are supposed to get hold of their own sandbags and JG had ordered more sand for the bins at the Rec car park, but the clerk was asked to request more bags from Rother DC. SP asked the clerk to report Lower Wilting drain and a drain opposite Dawn Cottage to Highways.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Jill Mitcheson and Gary Curtis, RDC.

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

4. Adoption of Minutes

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the parish council held on 19th December 2022 as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

5.1 Grit Bins – bins are still empty in Station Road, but the clerk has chased Network Rail twice who are promising to fill them. She had further reported the upended grit bin at the foot of Ballards Hill and the missing grit bin from opposite the entrance to Adam's Farm to Highways.

5.2 Leak in the pavilion – Luigi Romano's quote has been accepted, and he is hoping to complete the work over two days next week. The clerk was asked to find out if the cricket club still require a water supply to the square.

5.3 A letter of support to Catsfield PC has been sent.

5.4 De-fibs – Tony Barham will now install on 11th February as the VH was booked last minute on the previously arranged date.

5.5 Matting for the Pavilion floor – this has now been ordered, as per a revised quote to make the matting easier to lift and clean.

5.6 A 3-way meeting for the new year between the EA's Bio-diversity Team, the football club and the parish council is now arranged for Monday 6th February at 11am.

6. Representations from District & County Councillors

CLlr Field, ESCC said that they will probably require the maximum 2.99% increase on Council Tax plus the 2% rise for Adult Social Care (ASC). There is an overspend of £8.5m so far. Social services reform has been put on the back burner. The government is now looking at council reserves and wants it spent on services which is short-sighted. SP asked about the Town Hall project. KF said it didn't get planning permission, but she believes the associated traffic measures are going ahead. Finally, a current consideration is for Biffa lorries to run on hydro-treated vegetable oil which would save 96% of emissions, but at a cost of nearly £300k. This is currently dividing opinion.

In the absence of CLlr Curtis, there was no report from Rother DC.

7. Financial Matters

7.1 The financial report to 31st December had been previously circulated and was approved by members.

7.2 The payments report for January was considered and approved.

7.3 The bank reconciliation to 31st December 2022 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chairman.

7.4 Final draft of the budget for '23/'24 was approved.

7.5 The precept request form was approved, and the clerk was asked to complete, sign & submit it to Rother before the end of January deadline.

7.6 The clerk is waiting for confirmation of costs for a new auditor, having proposed Mulberry & Co.

8. Recreation Ground

8.1 RD reported that as she'd been away, and due to the flooding on the Rec, she had been unable to carry out much of the inspection. She will go as soon as it is possible. RD & JG will meet to arrange where to put up the new no dog signs. The de-fib rechargable torch is not working in the phone box and the clerk was asked to source a replacement.

8.2 The clerk provided an update from the handyman: the clerk needs to get a key cut for the barrier & supply a new break glass holder, and source playground parts for the next tasks on his list. She had one of the quotes for the items put out to tender and was awaiting a second. It is proving difficult to find anyone qualified to investigate the non-working clock on the pavilion roof. SP offered to contact Selwyn Whitehead who has helped in the past. JG thinks there is a leak in the roof of the clock tower & will investigate further.

8.3 Nothing further to add (see above).

9. Emergency & Resilience Planning

RD & GT hadn't had a chance to meet therefore this item is deferred to the next meeting.

10. Neighbourhood Plan

RD reported from a recent meeting of the Crowhurst NP Review Group. There is a requirement to change the Terms of Reference as the group name is changing, the meetings no longer need to be public as it is now a working group and there is no longer a requirement for 2 councillors and 2

members of the NP group in order to be quorate, but only 1 of each so that meetings can be arranged more easily. This will be brought back to next month's meeting.

Julia Edwards from Rother had come to last meeting and was very helpful and positive. All parishes are invited to Rother to look at Local Plan and Crowhurst is meeting is on Friday 3rd February at 2pm in Bexhill. RD, SP, Pat Buckle & the clerk will attend.

SP reported that the next round of grant funding will be March, and Crowhurst will be applying for a grant to carry out public consultations. The group is also looking for new members.

11. High Weald AONB Dark Skies Festival in Crowhurst

SP reported that the event is booking up well. All events are free with various interesting events taking place (see minutes from December meeting), and a specially commissioned Dark Skies mug available for sale (£5). The astronomy event in the Pavilion on 22nd February will be exclusive to Crowhurst residents only (7.30-9pm on 22nd Feb.) as will the Youth Club event held on the same evening at the Youth Club Hut. Light meters that have been used by Environment Group volunteers to measure light levels across the parish over the last year. This data will be used by HWAONB to create a map of Crowhurst showing areas of light pollution and dark skies. This document will feed into the revised NP and hopefully support Crowhurst's Dark Skies policy. SP said that more volunteers are always welcome to support events, and posters are going up around the village later in the week.

12. Elections 2023

To promote the current councillor vacancy for the upcoming elections, RD suggested a leaflet drop in the village early March. SP suggested council surgeries at village events such as the coffee morning and farmers' market. The clerk had circulated ESALC's email asking for inspiring success stories to promote the roll of the parish council, and SP offered to speak to Audrey Koop (Chairperson) about Warmer Crowhurst. Polling day is 4th May and 4th April is the closing date for nominations. The clerk was asked to include a piece in the Crowhurst News in every issue between now & May and investigate the costs to leaflet drop via the royal Mail, although there are merits to personal delivery. GT doesn't feel that it would be cost-effective. RD asked for any other thoughts by Friday.

13. Community Award 2022

The clerk was asked to write an ad style feature for the Crowhurst News asking for nominations for the award. The award is normally presented at the Parish Assembly held at the end of April.

14. Warm Space & Support for Vulnerable Residents

i) LR provided an update – the Pub is the Hub grant application supported by the PC was turned down – they had been inundated with applications and wanted the schemes to more permanent ventures. Other sources of funding will be followed up such as the Tesco Community Group and East Sussex Well-Being Fund, but the need is pressing if they are to be ready for 21st January. Lewis from The Plough has been very helpful. LR contacted Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) (Annette Holmes) to arrange a meeting & they will help to set up the Crowhurst Support Group to allow groups to take projects forward.

A poster is ready to go up around the village and word of mouth has been spreading the event details. It will provide a chance to get information on benefits and other means of support and the response has been very positive response from straw poll but can't know how it will develop from here.

ii) Lewis has submitted a grant application to the PC for £500, and LR strongly recommended that the council support it. After a brief discussion, there was unanimous support from members. The

clerk was asked to liaise with Lewis about monitoring the spend, and keeping records for audit purposes.

15. Community Map

SP provided a summary to date. The project is to produce a hand drawn map showing visitors who arrive at the station and local residents too, footpaths highlighting business, environmental, historical and geographical features of a typical High Weald village. However, it is experiencing funding difficulties. Rother wouldn't agree to the grant application from the Community Railway Partnership as their head office is based outside of Rother. Therefore the PC has been asked to make the application on their behalf. Furthermore, a grant has been requested of the PC to complete the project, which is all time-sensitive as the funding from the Community Rail Partnership is only valid until the end of March 2023. RD said that a lot of work has gone into it, and when finished, a scanned electronic copy would be an excellent addition to the website too. She proposed that a grant for up to £1000 be given, and all members agreed. The clerk was asked to expediate the grant application with Rother as a matter of urgency.

16. Planning Matters

16.1 RR/2022/3014/FN – Hillcroft Farm, Royal Oak Lane, Crowhurst

Application to determine if prior approval is required for an extension to a portal framed farm building. This is a Farm Notice (FN), so for information only. No comments required.

17. Councillor Updates on External Bodies

17.1 Village Hall Management Committee – the next meeting is imminent but nothing to report until then.

17.2 Policing Meeting – date for the next meeting still to be confirmed. RD reported from the recent RALC meeting that all crime should be reported, even if it seems trivial, as it builds a picture.

17.3 Combe Valley – next meeting on 22nd Feb – nothing to report meantime.

17.4 RALC meeting - Cllr Day had attended the meeting last week and reported that Rother's Planning department have caught up on the backlog and they are now fully staffed (apart from 2 on maternity leave). A full-time employee to replace Myles Joyce is starting soon.

18. Clerk's Report

18.1 The clerk asked for the relevant information for the digital map for the Queen's Green Canopy project. The clerk will submit online.

18.2 Horticultural Bench still hasn't been moved to Station Road. Clerk was asked to phone & chase.

19. Review of Council Policy

NALC are keen to get councils to sign up to the Civility & Respect pledge. A few policies need to be in place and up to date before this can happen. The clerk will circulate the necessary details in advance of the next meeting.

20. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

SP suggested updates on a Warm Space & Warmer Crowhurst and also that "Environment" is a regular agenda item.

The clerk suggested Parish Assembly planning.

21. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Monday 20th February 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.33pm

Signed by

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Date: