



Minutes of the **ANNUAL MEETING** of the Parish Council held on
Monday 22nd May 2023 at 7.30pm
in Crowhurst Village Hall, Forewood Lane, Crowhurst.

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Geoff Thomas, Sonia Plato & Lynda Roller

District/County Councillors present: Chas Pearce, RDC

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk and 21 members of the public

1.	<p>ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN</p> <p>The outgoing chairman opened the meeting and asked for proposals for a new chairman. SP proposed Cllr Geoff Thomas and this was seconded by LR. GT was duly elected as chair and signed his acceptance of office form. Ros Day left the meeting after being thanked for all her hard work.</p>
2.	<p>ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN</p> <p>LR proposed Cllr Sonia Plato as Vice-Chairman, and this was seconded by GT. Cllr Sonia Plato was duly elected as vice-chair and signed her acceptance of office form.</p>
3.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE & REGISTERS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS</p> <p>The Chairman moved Item 19 forward on the agenda to consider applications for co-option received from Jill Mitcheson & John Goddard. The applicants left the room whilst the council discussed their suitability, and all members approved their co-option. JM & JG signed their acceptance of office forms and completed new Registers of Interest.</p> <p>Other members had previously handed their signed declarations of acceptance of office & registers of members interests to the Clerk.</p>
4.	<p>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</p> <p>Alan Stainsby asked for paper copies of the agenda to be made available at meetings, and for the re-instatement of the parish council quarterly newsletter. He further requested that the Emergency Plan be re-visited and published. GT said that these items would be discussed at the next meeting, and that the Emergency & Resilience Plan has been updated recently and is now largely complete and ready for publication.</p> <p>Other questions from the public concerned the planning application for a natural burial ground on the Crowhurst/Catsfield border in Catsfield Lane. There were concerns about seepage into the water courses, the suitability of the site, traffic issues and badgers digging up the buried which is a documented problem at other natural burial sites in the country. After listening to the applicant also, who referred to the advantage of a rewilded site with tree planting which would be secure from development for 150 years, the parish council decided that they would not presently support the application based on the reports from the various agencies already consulted. Members of the public were reminded that they can make their comments known on the planning portal at Rother District Council's website. Many of them then left the meeting.</p>
5.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Kathryn Field.</p>

<p>6.</p>	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Received from: Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee Cllr Roller – Member of the Crowhurst Environment Group Cllr Plato – Youth Club & Crowhurst Environment Group</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>ADOPTION OF MINUTES The Chairman was authorised to approve and sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting of Crowhurst Parish Council held on 17th April 2023 as a true and correct record.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS The proposed dates for future meetings of the parish council had previously been circulated and were approved. They are confirmed as: 2023 – 19th June, 17th July, 18th September, 16th October, 20th November & 18th December. 2024 – 15th January, 19th February, 18th March & 15th April All meetings will take place at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Crowhurst.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED IN THIS AGENDA: 9.1 The use of the containers for storage by the football club will be discussed at the Rec User Group meeting being held on 24th May. 9.2 The offer of a new/additional pavilion pre-fab building from the football club will also be discussed at the meeting on 24th May. A site visit needs to be arranged. 9.3 Community Map – SP confirmed that the oak for the frame has been sourced and the design now needs to be agreed upon. There have been requests for copies of the map which could be sold subject to copyright approval, which needs to be confirmed with Audrey Koop. 9.4 Feasibility Study, Sandrock Hill – the clerk had chased the now overdue report which was delayed due to the new contractors starting at Highways. It is promised without further delay and the clerk will circulate it as soon as it is received.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIONS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS 10.1 District Councillor Chas Pearce said that he had been enjoying an intensive induction period, and the first full council meeting is taking place on 24th May when all the chairs for the various committees will be elected. An alliance has been formed between Labour, Lib Dems and the Association of Independents as there are now 8 Labour members. At a Service briefing this morning, very complimentary comments were made about Crowhurst’s Environment Group. 10.2 County Councillor Kathryn Field was absent.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING: 11.1 To consider the following new Planning Application and provide comments to Rother District Council: 11.1.1 RR/2023/767/P – Crowhurst Lane, Land to the east of Catsfield / Crowhurst <i>Proposal: Use of land as a natural burial ground.</i> See Item 4. The following applications were for information only as no comments are required at this stage: 11.2.1 RR/2023/769/O – Nashes Farm, Catsfield Road, Crowhurst TN33 9BU <i>Proposal: Certificate of Lawfulness for the existing use of land as residential curtilage</i> 11.2.2 RR/2023/740/O – Woodside, Old Forewood Lane, Crowhurst TN33 9AE <i>Proposal: Certificate of Lawfulness for the existing use of a garage as an office/storage space</i></p>

<p>12.</p>	<p>RFO REPORT:</p> <p>12.1 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)</p> <p>12.1.1 The clerk had previously circulated the full report from Andy Beams of Mulberry & Co. following the audit. Members were in agreement with any recommendations and approved the report.</p> <p>12.1.2 The clerk then read aloud the Annual Governance Statement and members agreed to the signing thereof. GGT and the clerk duly signed the form.</p> <p>12.1.3 Section 2 the Accounting Statement had previously been circulated and was approved for signing.</p> <p>12.1.4 To clerk confirmed the dates of the Notice of Electors’ Rights to be 19 June to 28 July 2023.</p> <p>12.2 The end of year financial report to 31st March 2023 had previously been circulated. The overspend was attributed to the installation of the bollard lights, and the clerk has prepared the summary of variances against budget to submit to the external auditor.</p> <p>12.3 The end of year Bank Reconciliation to 31st March 2023 together with supporting bank statement had been circulated and was approved. Also, the bank reconciliation to April 30th which was signed by the Chairman.</p> <p>12.4 The payments report previously circulated was approved for payment.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>RECREATION GROUND:</p> <p>13.1 JG had previously carried out the monthly inspection of the Recreation Ground. The most important point to note was the repairs to the path, carried out by a team of volunteers from the youth club, the pre-school parents and the parish council. 10 tons of road planings had been used and it is much improved, although JG reminded members it was only a temporary repair. The rodding of the overflow pipe from the pond at Blacksmith’s Cottage and the ditch clearance had also helped to alleviate the flooding issue. All volunteers were thanked for their hard work by those present. SP also reported that the outside area is now almost ready for use by the Youth Club and she thanked JG for his help.</p> <p>13.2 The Youth Club had made a request to hold a bonfire and fireworks display on the Recreation Ground in October/November 2023. Members felt that the bonfire may be an issue depending on where it was located, and the noise of the fireworks. Cllr Pearce offered to help as he had been involved in previous firework displays in Crowhurst. It was also suggested that the Battle Bonfire Boyes can organise a firework display and GT said that this may help with risk assessments and health & safety requirements. SP will report further after the next meeting of the Youth Club Committee on 24th May.</p> <p>13.3 Nothing further to add regarding the path repair – see item 13.1.</p> <p>13.4 The next Rec User Group meeting will take place on 24th May – GT & JG will attend.</p> <p>13.5 The best location of the new de-fib for the Pavilion was discussed. Despite it being easiest to install if it is close to the circuit board, the opposite end in view of the football pitch was deemed a more appropriate location, and the clerk will liaise with the electrician to arrange installation.</p> <p>13.6 The handyman is now visiting only once a month and hadn’t been since the last meeting. He has completed almost all the tasks on the list.</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p>ASSET REGISTER AND RISK ASSESMENT</p> <p>The clerk had amended the Asset Register in line with the suggestions at the previous meeting and re-circulated the register. Members approved the updated asset register & risk assessment which the auditor had also deemed sufficient for a council of such a size.</p>
<p>15.</p>	<p>STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS & OTHER POLICIES</p> <p>15.1 The Financial Regulations 2023/24 had been circulated for approval and were unchanged from ‘22/’23. Members approved them for adoption.</p> <p>15.2 The Standing Orders 2023/24 had been circulated for approval and were unchanged from ‘22/’23. Members approved them for adoption.</p>

	<p>15.3 The clerk offered to update the monthly playground rota for 2023/24 following the co-option of JM & JG. This will be revisited at the next meeting.</p> <p>15.4 Equally, the schedule of Councillors' lead responsibilities needs to include the newly co-opted councillors and will be revisited at the next meeting.</p>
16.	<p>ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY</p> <p>Members discussed the recent assembly and felt it had gone quite well. There was a good turnout of 30-40 people, who had enjoyed the 1st Aid presentation. GT suggested holding it on a Saturday next year, but it was decided that a date could be agreed upon and set later in the year.</p>
17.	<p>NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN</p> <p>SP reported that there is a NP Group meeting tomorrow night. They will be looking at new policies which will go to a referendum, particularly looking at the Renewables Policy (energy efficiency), the Dark Skies Policy (with reference to the AONB and following the recent festival) and also looking at changes to the draft design guide. The original plan was to go ahead with public consultations etc. over the summer, but grant applications from Locality haven't yet been notified, and without funding these have been delayed. The NP must be reviewed as Rother hasn't finalized their Local Plan yet. There are some new members of the group, and Chris Davidson intends to do a presentation at the next parish council meeting to bring members up to date.</p>
18.	<p>HIGHWAYS</p> <p>The next SLR Meeting was due to take place in May, but again with the new contractors, Balfour Beatty starting on 1st May, this has been delayed and the next available dates are in August. The clerk confirmed who would attend from the council and if any dates were preferred and will then arrange the meeting with Highways. There was some discussion about poor pothole repairs and 'Road Closed' signage not relating to actual road closures. The clerk has reported this latter point to Highways.</p>
19.	<p>ELECTION RESULTS</p> <p>This item was moved forward on the agenda (see Item 3).</p>
20.	<p>COUNCILLOR UPDATES ON EXTERNAL BODIES (IF ANY):</p> <p>20.1 Village Hall Management Committee – GT reported that there will be new curtains, and that Rother's Village Hall project is holding a meeting in June (actual date TBC) when funding will be discussed. It was noted that, potentially, Village Halls may have to find match funding and part of the meeting would be looking at how this can be achieved. The VH committee is hoping for at least funding for insulation and double glazing.</p> <p>20.2 Policing meeting - LR reported that the last meeting took place on 20th April, but without the new sergeant who had resigned already. Steve O'Connell from Sussex Safer Roads said that between April & September they will be targeting anti-social driving. There was an 'Elder drivers course' recently, although no reports yet on how it went.</p> <p>There has been a lot of recent reports of illegal fishing and camping at Adams Farm. The Rural Crime officer had visited the site but requested that a vehicle number plate and a precise location would be useful in future. She suggested using the "what 3 words" app The next meeting is on 29th June, so please let LR know of any concerns that need to be reported.</p> <p>20.3 Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC – Currently dealing with fish in the lake which need to be removed. Also, some illegal camping has been by homeless people, and dedicated wardens do speak to them and help them access resources. GT offered to circulate the minutes and confirmed that Green Team funding has been extended.</p>
21.	<p>CLERK'S REPORT:</p> <p>The clerk is updating the bank mandate in line with a change of signatories. New security tokens have been received and she will help members activate them in due course.</p>

22.	INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● NP Review● Warmer Crowhurst Update● Youth Club lease clarification● Warm Space funding – the RVA have been in touch with LR to help with funding applications for the autumn’s Warm Space initiative.
23.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING: <p>To note that the next meeting, the AGM of the Council, will be held on Monday 19th June 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.</p>