

# Crowhurst

## PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on  
**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 7.30pm** in the Village Hall

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Geoff Thomas (Chairman) (GT), Sonia Plato (SP), Lynda Roller (LR), Jill Mitcheson (JM), Sue Laimbeer (SL) and John Goddard (JG).

District/County Councillors present: Cllr Chas Pearce, RDC (CP)  
 In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk and 9 members of the public.

<p><b>1.</b></p>	<p><b>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>Nick Stell raised the question about parking following the discussion at the September meeting. The clerk said that not much progress had been made as she hasn't been able to arrange a meeting with the Football Club yet, and the police said that it is a matter for Rother.</p> <p><b>**The meeting with the football club has now been arranged**</b></p> <p>Another member of the public talked about parking on the verge on Sandrock Hill, and how it makes it muddy &amp; slippery and looks unsightly. GT explained that the licence application is still being processed (since the end of August), and once granted a public consultation will take place. However, solving parking problems in one place in Crowhurst often displaces the problem elsewhere.</p> <p>Will Kemp mentioned speeding cars leaving the Recreation car park following some football matches and also the tree felling on Chapel Hill. He suggested when the item is discussed on the agenda that the council follow this up and try to get a conviction of the people who have disregarded the TPO's and get the value of the trees reimbursed.</p>
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Kathryn Field.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:</b></p> <p>Received from:</p> <p>Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee</p> <p>Cllr Roller – Member of the Crowhurst Environment Group</p> <p>Cllr Plato – Youth Club &amp; Crowhurst Environment Group</p> <p>Cllr Laimbeer – Annual Fayre Committee, Horticultural Group &amp; Crowhurst Environment Group</p>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:</b></p> <p>The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and the additional meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November as true &amp; correct records.</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED IN THIS AGENDA:</b></p> <p>5.1 Bollards on Sandrock Hill – Having chased Highways, the clerk was informed that the application is still being processed by the licensing department.</p> <p>5.2 Football Club parking - The clerk has tried repeatedly to arrange a meeting with members of the football teams but has had no response. CP offered to contact the president of the club.</p> <p>5.3 Community Map – SP reported that the frame is now finished, and grant funds received from Rother DC. She is meeting with Andy Pope about the agreed location &amp; then it will be erected.</p>

	<p>5.4 Tree Safety Survey –A second quote has been obtained. The clerk is going to get a third quote and check with the insurance company about the trees that are well away from any public footpath. SP expressed concern about the extent of the felling &amp; ivy removal. She will have a look with JG &amp; report back before any work is carried out.</p> <p>5.5 Car Park EV Chargers – The clerk had a preliminary conversation with Believ who will report further with details after looking at the grid, other nearby chargers, the likely demand, and the potential speed of chargers.</p> <p>5.6 Emergency Plan –There had been a suggestion that it would be useful to get the wardens together. The clerk will arrange a meeting.</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>REPRESENTATIONS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS:</b></p> <p>Cllr Pearce reported that the main topic is the financial difficulty for Rother. There is a £3.8 m shortfall and a money saving programme is being put together to hopefully only draw down £0.5m from reserves. Some measures include the previously mentioned closure of public toilets and cash-free car parking. Some good news is the planned free parking in Battle over the Christmas period from 25<sup>th</sup> November. Please check for further details and specific dates.</p> <p>No report in Cllr Field’s absence, but she subsequently sent the following: A £60m+ budget deficit is on the horizon. Our settlement from government is expected in late December as usual, but it usually arrives in late January. The County Council is desperately in need of foster carers. A lot have retired, and it is undoubtedly challenging work but rewarding. If anyone is interested or could spread the word that would be helpful.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><i>The Chairman then brought forward agenda items 11 &amp; 12 using Standing Order 1(a) to allow for public discussion.</i></p> <p><b>TREES ON CHAPEL HILL – Site adjacent to Penroy</b></p> <p>John Feltwell, Tree Warden and Ecologist provided a report on the recent felling of all trees with TPO’s by a developer and clearance of the site. He had sent a report to Sarah Shepherd, Rother Tree Officer and to Rother’s Planning Dept. The area is in the AONB, is a Section 41 Rother habitat and TPO’s cover many of the mature trees. Planning permission over-rides TPO’s, however this process should be transparent and 5 days notice given. Planning permission had been granted for 2 semi-detached buildings, but some TPO’d trees were to be conserved, including the upper part of the site where a barrier was to be erected to retain biodiversity and those trees above. Tree surgeons cleared the site regardless, following the Rother Planning Officer’s authorisation and diggers have now removed 400 tons of soil too. This has changed the topography and there is a risk of an imminent pollution incident with silt from the clay highly likely to pollute the Powdermill Stream running along the bottom of the site, leading to suffocation of invertebrates. JF is ready to register that with the Environment Agency (EA) as soon as it happens.</p> <p>CP said that he agrees wholeheartedly with everything JF has said and the actions he has taken so far and supports them entirely.</p> <p>The tree surgeons on site said that they had permission from Brian Griffiths in Rother’s Planning Dept. Neither he nor Sarah Shepherd have responded to JF’s communications. JF has made a FOI request, and the PC are happy to support him reporting the incident to the police as a further measure.</p> <p>There was further discussion from many members of the public with questions about how services are going to be connected to the new buildings, and great concern about the earth bank and 3 phase cables just below the site being cleared. SP proposed that the PC write on behalf of attendees to support the concerns expressed by JF, copying in the EA, ESCC, UKPN, Huw Merriman, MP and Southern Water. A site meeting should also be requested with the developer. JF and the clerk to follow up.</p> <p>ii. Trees suffering from ash die-back on Chapel Hill opposite Powdermill Bank, Park View and behind the chapel are causing concern. The landowner has previously been prevented from cutting them back by UKPN, due to power cables running below them. The landowner has agreed to the PC requesting action from UK Power Networks, for permission for the affected trees to be felled by the landowner. Members agreed to a letter of support being sent to UKPN.</p>

<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>FLOODING</b></p> <p>The Flood Warden, Tracy Hoad, reported that there have been several incidents of flooding over the recent weeks with water coming into gardens. Areas affected are Sandrock Crescent and the two properties alongside Powdermill Stream on Forewood Lane. Flooding is becoming a more frequent occurrence, and water levels are high. Insurance for some of the properties is very high or even refused. She has been liaising with the Environment Agency about possible remedial action. Dean Morrison, who works in Flood Management at the High Weald Unit, has also been involved in meetings and he has spoken to the landowner to see what can be done further upstream as part of the Sussex Flow natural flood prevention initiative as well as alongside the flood risk properties. Having looked at some modeling, he thinks measures could be taken that wouldn't be as expensive as the previously proposed remedial actions by the Environment Agency which would in any case, now have to be re-submitted. Dean offered to liaise with the EA and landowner in order to take forward the process of planning and design. His proposal was for a natural bund and field flood area to be established and he will follow this up and keep TH informed. GT said that the parish council will be happy to offer support once specific plans are in place.</p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING:</b></p> <p>To consider the following new Planning Applications and provide comments to Rother District Council:</p> <p>i. RR/2023/2294/P – Nashes Farmhouse, Catsfield Road, Crowhurst TN33 9BU  <i>Proposal: Erection of a side extension incorporating existing structure at ground floor.</i>  After a brief discussion, councillors felt that there was no reason not to support this application as there will be no impact on neighbours or other views. The following comments were approved for submission online:  <i>Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application with the following conditions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32 (v) of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan.</li> <li>2. Any new hard-standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).</li> </ol> <p>ii. RR/2023/2147/P – Southmead, Swainham Lane, Crowhurst TN38 8ED  <i>Proposal: Conversion of existing garage to form self-contained residential annexe.</i>  After a brief discussion, councillors felt that there was no reason not to support this application as there will be no impact on neighbours or other views. The following comments were approved for submission online:  <i>Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application with the following conditions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32 (v) of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan.</li> <li>2. Any new hard-standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).</li> </ol>
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>FINANCIAL MATTERS:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The financial report to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 together with a summary report of receipts &amp; payments that had been previously circulated was approved.</li> <li>ii. The payments report for October 2023 was considered and approved for payment.</li> <li>iii. The bank reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> October together with a copy of the supporting bank statement had been circulated and was approved and signed by the Chairman.</li> <li>iv. The first draft of the 2024/'25 budget proposals had been circulated. The clerk provided detailed budget headline breakdown and will also produce a Reserves statement. The budget will be re-examined at the next meeting. JM will look at various funding options for the Recreation Ground refurbishment (playground/car park improvements etc.)</li> <li>v. The clerk's backdated pay of £604.68 to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 in line with the recent Local Government Services Pay agreement for 2023/'24 was approved. This includes backdating the home office allowance (£26pcm) in place of the agreed £45.</li> </ol>
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>RECREATION GROUND:</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. LR&amp; SL had carried out the monthly inspection. The area of concrete appearing in the ground from an old base of a piece of equipment needs removing from the picnic area. The clerk was asked to mention it to the handyman or find another contractor to break it up &amp; remove it. The bench by the fence is rotten and needs removing. JG offered to remove it. GT asked the clerk to investigate the cost of replacing all 4 picnic benches, 2 of which are in urgent need of replacement. The Pavilion door sills on both back doors are rotting, and putty has chipped off the decking door. The clerk will ask the handyman also about the bollard light footings which need stabilising.</li> <li>ii. CCTV policy –The pre-school &amp; youth club approved the drafted CCTV policy so the clerk will now publish it on the website. JG to install the camera and put up signage.</li> <li>iii. The clerk didn't have an update from the handyman – deferred to the next meeting.</li> <li>iv. Nick Stell had cleared the grass cuttings from the ditch and cut back the hedge along the footpath.</li> </ul>
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>TENNIS COURT REFURB/MUGA FACILITY</b></p> <p>There have been over 70 survey responses to date with almost 100% positive feedback. SP &amp; the clerk will complete the grant application form. The application requires the PC to have a Child Protection Policy in place. The clerk had circulated a draft policy previously to all councilors and the Chairman proposed adopting it on an interim basis until such a time as a Safeguarding Officer has done the training and is appointed. All members agreed. GT thanked SP for all her work to date on the funding application.</p>
	<p><b>RECENT FLOODING</b></p> <p>See agenda item 8.</p>
	<p><b>TREES ON CHAPEL HILL</b></p> <p>See agenda item 7.</p>
<b>13.</b>	<p><b>WARM SPACES</b></p> <p>LR confirmed the change of venue to the Youth Hut for the coming weekend has been advertised. She is proposing to have 'Christmas Cheer' on 10<sup>th</sup> December and serve mince pies &amp; sausage rolls. Volunteers are particularly required for the middle part of the sessions, and they have received about 20 visitors in total so far. She has also asked the WI to make cakes to offer after soup. The clerk was asked to chase the donation from Jempsons.</p>
<b>14.</b>	<p><b>ROAD SAFETY ON SANDROCK HILL</b></p> <p>Members agreed to follow up the offer from the Highways Road Safety department to apply to the small-scale changes budget to install yellow backed signs and a roundel painted on the road. The clerk will follow up.</p>
<b>15.</b>	<p><b>GRASS CUTTING OPTIONS FOR 2024</b></p> <p>The parish council agreed to continue with self-delivery for 2024. The clerk will inform Highways before the December deadline.</p>
<b>16.</b>	<p><b>NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW</b></p> <p>GT reported that this is all going ahead with planned public meetings and consultation in place. Furthermore, he has asked the clerk to arrange a meeting with Graeme Quinnell at Rother DC about how to set up a Community Land Trust (CLT). All councillors will be welcome to attend. SP had forwarded an email about Community Funding to purchase an asset or open space which could be useful.</p>
<b>17.</b>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR UPDATES ON EXTERNAL BODIES (IF ANY):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Village Hall Management Committee (Cllr. Thomas)–Nothing to report as they are still trying to get a quote for an air source heat pump which is proving tricky.</li> <li>ii. Policing meeting (Cllr. Mrs. Roller) – LR – nothing to report. However, LR is attending the Focus Group on 28<sup>th</sup> Nov. The Clerk was asked to check if Daryl Holter is the new Wildlife Crime officer.</li> </ul>

	<p>iii. Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC – WK reported that the Environment Group together with the Friends of Combe Valley cleared a footpath previously which now needs cutting back again. However, there is evidence that dormice are nesting there, and so work cannot be carried out. SP has asked for an expert to inspect the area and confirm if dormice are present.</p>
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<p><b>18.</b></p>	<p><b>CLERK’S REPORT &amp; INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Rother’s Annual Parish Conference – 5<sup>th</sup> December, Brede Village Hall. SP also suggested that someone from the NP Review Group may wish to attend.</li> <li>ii. Planning Development &amp; Enforcement Training – 5.30pm on 12<sup>th</sup> December (SL to attend)</li> <li>iii. Letter of thanks from the Croquet Club – previously circulated.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>19.</b></p>	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING:</b> To note that the next meeting of the Council will be held on <b>Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.</b></p>
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Meeting closed at 9.38pm

Signed.....

Date.....