

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 18th March 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

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

County/district councillor: Chas Pearce, RDC

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk (remotely) and 2 members of the public

1. Public Questions

Will Kemp said that some residents in Blacksmiths Field hadn't heard about the recent parish meeting to discuss the installation of bollards, and wanted to ensure that they are not missed off any future communications. GT said that the working party would make a note of that, and it will be covered later in the meeting (Item 11).

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC.

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

Cllr Laimbeer - Annual Fayre Committee, Horticultural Society & Crowhurst Environment Group

4. Councillor Vacancy

Members had previously met with a candidate who had expressed interest in the current councillor vacancy. A second applicant will be seen next week, and a decision made on co-option thereafter with a view to the new member joining at the April meeting.

5. Adoption of Minutes

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the parish council held on 13th February as a true and correct record. The minutes from the parish meeting on 19th February had not been circulated in time, and approval was deferred to the next meeting.

6. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

- 6.1 Sandbags – The clerk hasn't had time to contact the Environment Agency about their removal – item deferred.
- 6.2 Emergency Warden meeting – the clerk will circulate notes from the meeting in January and set up the agreed WhatsApp group.
- 6.3 EV Charging points – another EV charge point supplier had made contact and the clerk is checking that by signing an NDA with Believ, it doesn't prevent making contact with another supplier.

6.4 Edendale meeting – A remote meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 27th March at 10am, to include the manager of Edendale Lodge and two representatives from Belmont Healthcare.

7. Representations from District & County Councillors

Cllr Chas Pearce, RDC reported on a couple of consultations – the first which is currently open for comment is the Public Spaces Protection Order, closing on 3rd May, about camping or parking on the beach at Herbran Walk, Bexhill and Camber. The second on the Local Plan is starting in early April and will run for 12 weeks. RDC will be holding events in the community to encourage participation. He confirmed that RDC's full budget had now been approved and he said that due to an administrative error there was a lack of attendance at the Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC board meeting as many did not receive an email regarding the event. GT had attended and will report later (Item 16.1).

Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC – no report in Cllr Field's absence.

8. Town & Country Planning

8.1 RR/2024/148/PN3 – Hill House Farm, barn at adj land – Crowhurst Lane, TN33 9BU

Proposal: Application to determine if prior approval is required for the change of use of agricultural building to flexible commercial use for non-agricultural storage (Class 8B).

****Comments previously submitted using the clerk's delegated authority****

The clerk further reported that the decision notice had been received earlier in the day refusing the PN3. She had circulated it for information.

8.2 RR/2024/232/P – The Firs Rest Home, Old Forewood Lane, Crowhurst TN33 9AX

Proposal: Proposed change of use of care home to residential dwellinghouse.

After a brief discussion, members agreed on the following comments which the clerk will submit online: *Crowhurst Parish Council support the application in principle but would wish to see future use restricted to residential use and a plan to decontaminate the land of any hazardous/chemical waste in relation to the issues raised by neighbours. If permission is granted, we request that the following conditions are included:*

- 1. No or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32 (v) of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan.*
- 2. Any new hard-standing to be made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).*
- 3. The Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide is followed regarding building style and materials used.*

9. Financial Matters

9.1 The financial report to 29th February had been circulated and was approved by members.

9.2 The payments report for March was considered and approved.

9.3 The bank reconciliation to 29th February 2024 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chairman.

9.4 The purchase of a new double bin was approved at a cost of approximately £600 + VAT depending on options. The clerk will order it and arrange delivery/installation.

9.5 The NP Review Group's request to cover remaining costs in the event of a further grant application being unsuccessful was considered. The grant previously awarded by Groundwork UK must be spent by the 31st March 2024, and due to delays with elements produced by Rother DC, there has been a knock on delay to print some of the NP Review documentation. Members agreed to fund up to £500 of additional costs, if necessary, but a further application would need to be made for any more.

10. Recreation Ground

10.1 SP had carried out the monthly inspection and reported the following:

The caretaker had been away, and it had been difficult to arrange cover. It was then found that the cupboard containing cleaning items was locked, and no new bin bags were available. Glenys Cornwall had cleaned where possible, though found it difficult due to the poor state of the pavilion interior. However, it wasn't too bad, and the caretaker is due back this week.

The fencing around the gate area into the playground needs attention.

More bark chippings are required, and the clerk was asked to order them and arrange delivery.

The 2nd rope in on the monkey bars swing has frayed and needs replacing. The clerk will source a replacement.

The bollard lights are still in need of stabilising and repair. The handyman has been waiting for the ground to be less saturated. The clerk to follow up.

10.2 The clerk said that the handyman has not been since the previous meeting, waiting for better weather conditions for the outside work.

10.3 Tennis court / MUGA update. SP reported that the grant application to Rother had been successful and a sum of up to £19,250 (to a maximum of 50% of the costs) had been awarded. Members agreed that the clerk and SP could act as representatives of the council to liaise with contractors and progress the project. They will also organise a working group of volunteers to manage the new facilities. The clerk was asked to put a notice to this effect in the next edition of the Crowhurst News.

10.4 The request to book the Recreation Ground for the Annual Fayre from 7th - 9th June was approved. The clerk has already informed other Rec Users of the dates. The clerk had also received a request from the school for the Yr 6 Leavers Party earlier that day, to be held on Tuesday 23rd July. This was agreed in principle but will await the booking form details.

11. Parish Meeting – Sandrock Hill

Following the parish meeting, it was agreed that a working group of councillors and volunteer residents would work together and come up with possible solutions. GT, SP & JG will represent the parish council and Will Kemp volunteered to join them. GT said that the new working group would ensure that word gets to everyone about future meetings etc.

12. Flood Alleviation

Tracy Hoad had provided an update from Dean Morrison which had been circulated to all members. GT proposed that the parish council continue to support Tracy in her efforts and thanked her for the update. Members agreed unanimously.

13. Neighbourhood Plan Review

GT reported that a meeting was scheduled the following morning to talk to the Chairman and Treasurer of Icklesham Community Land Trust (CLT) to ask their advice on the process, practicalities and pitfalls of setting up a CLT. He will report further at the next meeting. SP reported that a meeting had now been set up with Huw Merriman MP at 2.30pm on 4th April to discuss and hopefully move forward the Neighbourhood Plan CP3 development site by the station car park, owned by Network Rail. SP and GT to attend the meeting and report back to the NP Review and Monitoring Group and the Parish Council.

14. Annual Parish Assembly 2024

14.1 The clerk confirmed that invitations had been issued to the various clubs and societies including the police, the school and the pre-school for the annual Assembly. The publicity boards had been dropped off for updating and would be collected and displayed mid-April. There will also be a

separate notice in the Crowhurst News and on the website. Andrew Mead, Head of Waste & Recycling at Rother will attend as a guest speaker.

14.2 The date for nominations for the Community Award had closed on 8th March, and 6 nominations had been received. The chairman ran through the list, and members voted on the chosen recipient. The clerk was asked to organise the trophy ready for presentation at the Annual Assembly.

15. Warm Space

LR reported that the last session was fast approaching on 24th March. Overall numbers attending had fluctuated from 7 to 25. She ran through the figures of donations received and costs and a profit of just over £1,000 looks like the result. A survey had been carried out amongst attendees to gain some feedback and asking how they would like to see any profits spent. The most popular suggestion was for a social hub continuing with crochet and guest speakers. This will be considered when planning for next year. GT thanked LR and JM for all their efforts in making the initiative such a success.

16. Councillor Updates on External Bodies

16.1 CVCP CIC – GT had attended the recent board meeting (see item 7.1) and reported that they are looking at bio-diversity net gain opportunities. The planned activity zone includes ideas for children and other visitors to participate in & observe various matters. The audited accounts were approved and a change of personnel of the board to include someone from Bexhill Town Council was agreed.

16.2 SP reported that Cllr Sharon Harris, Catsfield had raised concerns about the proposed housing development next to the White Hart pub in Catsfield, which had received many objections. Concerns regarding effluent from this development coming into Crowhurst Parish via Watermill Stream were raised by SP. Cllr Chas Pierce had called in the application. Crowhurst, as a parish in the AONB, would be entitled to comment if it went to Committee, as they had previously over concerns about the Normanhurst development.

16.3 SP had attended a Dark Skies Project Group meeting called by High Weald National Landscape (HWNL, formerly High Weald AONB) and David Field of Nature Recovery Network. This was well attended by a large number of Wealden villages and towns with a view to becoming a certified Dark Sky Community within 3 years.

CEG had taken light meter readings across 4 areas in Crowhurst in addition to those taken last year with some good results in some areas, but more could be done to address light pollution in certain areas. Information and workshops would be offered to help and advise. HWNL has secured 3 further years of funding for Dark Skies Festivals which will fund another Crowhurst Dark Skies Festival later this year.

17. Parish Clerk Position

The clerk updated on the candidates that had applied for the role before applications closed on 15th March. SL, JM, GT and SP will make up the interview panel and the clerk will arrange interviews for the following week.

18. Clerk's Report / Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

18.1 The clerk reminded members about the Rural Parish Conference on 19th April and asked them to let her know if they would like to attend.

18.2 The possible public meeting to be organised with the Environment Group to allow for speakers from Rother DC to update on their climate action plan couldn't be held on 18th May as suggested. A weekday evening would be more suitable, and the clerk was asked to continue with arrangements. GT mentioned that it should not clash with the solar farm planning application due to be validated by

Rother soon. SP provided an update that additional reports required had been submitted, including a noise report, so hopefully there should be no further delay in validation.

18.3 The clerk confirmed that the audit is booked in for 18th April. She also proposed that club fees for Recreation Ground use in the coming year be increased by 4% as detailed in the agreements, and members agreed that this was an appropriate increase. The hourly rate to hire the Rec would remain at £12.50 having increased last year. The clerk will communicate the increase to the various users.

19. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Monday 15th April 2024** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

Signed by

Date: