

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 15th April 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Sonia Plato (SP), Sue Laimbeer (SL) Jill Mitcheson (JM) and John Goddard (JG).

County/district councillor: Chas Pearce, RDC

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Parish Clerk (remotely) and 6 members of the public

In the Chairman's absence, Cllr Plato, Vice-Chair, acted as chairman for the meeting.

1. Public Questions

Nicola Stell asked if the new tennis court/MUGA will be raised to protect from flooding and if it will have a porous surface? SP answered that the existing surface will be cleaned and restored, but not raised, as that would be too expensive. She further mentioned that there will be a meeting at the end of May about forming a Community Working Group to manage the project and take it forward, and Nicola would be very welcome to join.

Alan Stainsby mentioned that he has been running the Strolling Group for a bit of exercise & social activity for older residents and had been asked to hand back a Pavilion key, as only councillors were allowed to be keyholders. He asked why this was the case and could that decision be reconsidered. SP explained that key holders make a deposit, and that the clerk is trying to make an up-to-date list of key holders for security purposes, and in case a second lock is fitted to the door, to know how many keys to provide. SP said that the Strolling Group was a valuable group within the community and provided many additional benefits. JM added that a concern had arisen when the decking around the Pavilion was very slippery and other users of the Pavilion signed agreements with a disclaimer about injuries so that the parish council isn't responsible. The clerk will send Mr Stainsby a copy of the agreement for signing, check the records for a key deposit, and include the Strolling Group in the next Rec User Group Meeting (to be held in May).

Will Kemp asked if the council would be applying for the Coronation Grant for more orchard trees. He suggested various locations around Crowhurst where trees could be planted including the Rec and the Millenium Garden. Southern Housing's permission would be required for Blacksmith's Field or Forewood Rise grassy area and they are notoriously slow to respond to enquiries. CP offered to provide a contact and JG confirmed that he would be happy to help with any tree planting. Clerk & SP to look into the grant application.

Tim Lewin wanted to thank the PC and District Councillor for their support with the current activity at Hill House Farm, Catsfield Road. He gave a summary of the current situation and said that he would continue to provide updates. The agent for the current owners is in the process of getting pre-application advice from Rother DC and will then make a full planning application. Members of the public can make comments about an application in the usual manner. He feels that there are two issues – what are the

plans for the building and secondly, what are the plans for the 25 acres of field to the east of the building. He is waiting to see what is detailed in the application.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Geoff Thomas, Lynda Roller and Kathryn Field, ESCC.

3. Declaration of Interests

Received from:

Cllr Plato – Youth Club & Crowhurst Environment Group

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

4. Councillor Vacancy

Members had previously met with candidates expressing an interest in the councillor vacancy. After discussions, they had chosen to co-opt Koorosh Ashrafi. He duly signed the Acceptance of Office form and joined the meeting as a new member.

5. Adoption of Minutes

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the parish council held on 18th March and the parish meeting on 19th February as true and correct records.

6. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

6.1 Sandbags – The clerk has contacted the Environment Agency who have asked the customer team for the local area to get in contact about their removal.

6.2 Emergency Warden meeting – the clerk has circulated notes from the meeting in January and is in the process of carrying out the actions.

6.3 EV Charging points – no further action since the last meeting.

6.4 Edendale meeting – The virtual meeting with Belmont Healthcare went ahead on 27th March. Notes from the meeting have been circulated to members. They are keen to engage locally and will be attending the Parish Assembly next week. There was a suggestion of allotments in the grounds which will be investigated by the clerk.

7. Representations from District & County Councillors

Cllr Chas Pearce, RDC began with some good news - RDC have been granted £19.3m from the Levelling Up fund and this is backed up by £14.9m from the Capital Programme. It is mainly for projects in and around Bexhill, but there will be a mobile community hub for rural societies and some monies for Rye swimming pool. He also mentioned the launch of the Coronation Community Orchard Fund (see Item 1). He further mentioned that it may be worth speaking to ESCC about unauthorised waste disposal or importing of waste on to a site update in relation to the activity at Hill House Farm.

In Cllr Kathryn Field's absence, she had sent the following report:

The County Council is quiet at the moment after the budget. We expect the new Director of Children's Services in June. The only items on the Cabinet agenda for tomorrow are the internal and external audit reports which are not problematic. The external auditors have highlighted the risk of fraudulent activity, but the risks have been rebutted.

8. Town & Country Planning

8.1 RR/2024/401/P – Woodend, Forewood Lane, Crowhurst TN33 9AA

Proposal: Proposed removal of lean-to existing outbuilding and construction of a single storey side extension to form proposed gym for personal use.

The parish council had no comments about this application.

- 8.2 RR/2024/316/P – Hye House, The Coach House, Royal Oak Lane, Crowhurst TN33 9BX
Proposal: Proposed ground floor single storey rear extension and first floor extension above the existing rear extension. Addition of solar panels (photo-voltaic) to the main roof and an air source heat pump in the garden. The proposal includes remodeling of the existing interior of the house.

After a brief discussion, councillors agreed to submit the following comments online:
Crowhurst Parish Council has no objection to this application. 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. The Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide is followed regarding building style and materials used.*

- 8.3 To consider the following enforcement case:
ENF/64/24/CRO – Barn at land adj Hill House Farm, Catsfield Road, Crowhurst
New Complaint
Previously mentioned - see Item 1.

9. Financial Matters

- 9.1 The financial report to 31st March had been circulated and was approved by members.
9.2 The payments report for April was considered and approved.
9.3 The bank reconciliation to 31st March 2024 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chairman.
9.4 To additional spending of £250 for production of the Community Map frame was approved. THE clerk is awaiting the invoice from Ben Wood for payment. SP added that at a recent meeting with Huw Merriman, MP, he had been shown the finished map and he was very impressed with it.
9.5 The refund of the unspent Groundwork UK grant for the NP Review of £705 was approved.
9.6 The year-end accounting statement and account reconciliations across all accounts had been circulated. The clerk will provide a further summary following the audit on 18th April.

10. Recreation Ground

- 10.1 LR had carried out the monthly inspection and had raised the following issues:
Woodchips depth – delivery of woodchips is due on 16th April.
Fence panels rotting – the clerk will mention this to the handyman.
Overhanging tree branches over the path – SP offered to lop off the ones at head height as required.
Monkey swings – frayed rope. The clerk to source a replacement part.
Window frame and door cills need attention – the clerk will tell the handyman.
The seat by the bin on the decking of the Pavilion is missing a screw. JG will deal with this.
The inside of the phone box is very cobwebby, and the door is going to need attention – deferred to the next meeting.
Someone recently noticed that the de-fib cover was off following some rowdy behaviour around the pub. SP asked all members to keep an eye on it.
- 10.2 The clerk had chased the handyman for an update but had not heard back from him. She will provide him with an updated list of jobs now that the weather is improving.
- 10.3 SP provided an update on the tennis court/MUGA refurb. There will be a meeting at the end of May to form a management committee to discuss the ongoing upkeep and use of the new facilities. The

clerk will provide an update on the progress of the work and timing. The Awards for All Lottery funding application has been submitted.

10.4 Formal approval of the school's request for the Yr 6 Leavers Party on 23rd July 2024 was given. A hire charge of £40 will be made, an increase of £5 on the previous year.

10.5 SL had asked for the provision of a dog waste bin on the Rec or somewhere in the vicinity of the footpath to be considered. There isn't one anywhere in the village and people are just leaving bags. CP offered to raise it at the Combe Valley CIC board meeting the following week. Members decided to delay the purchase of the recycling bin for now whilst investigating the possibility of a dog waste bin instead. SP will also ask Andrew Mead at the Annual Assembly next week.

11. Dark Skies

SP had previously circulated associated paperwork and the following resolution for consideration: 'Crowhurst Parish Council wish to work towards International Dark Skies Certification as part of a "Dark Sky Community" in the High Weald which aims to achieve this by the end of 2026.' Members agreed unanimously to support the resolution.

12. Neighbourhood Plan Review

SP reported that the Chairman, Ros Day from the NP Review Group and the clerk (and SP) had attended a recent meeting with Icklesham CLT to discuss possible next steps for Crowhurst. She summarised the background and confirmed that SP & GT had also attended a recent meeting with Huw Merriman, MP and Andy Pope, Community Network Rail. HM was impressed with the site & was in talks with the housing minister looking at neglected or unused Network Rail sites that could be sold off. He felt there was a will for movement & change at the top of Network Rail – bureaucracy in the middle was holding things up. He was very optimistic about it and SP will follow up at the Rural Parish Conference on Friday.

13. Annual Parish Assembly 2024

The clerk confirmed that refreshments, awards, and the publicity boards had been collected. She would chase for reports from the various clubs and societies. SL agreed to organise the glasses, and the clerk will contact someone about operating the projector and provide an agenda.

14. Warm Space

In LR's absence, JM reported that initial thoughts following the final session, are to certainly continue with the programme next winter, but perhaps for a shorter period. There is a plan to invite a guest speaker every week to provide a focus and encourage attendance. SP thanked everyone involved for their hard work as it seemed to have been a great success.

15. Councillor Updates on External Bodies (If any)

SP reported that the Combe Valley CIC had succeeded in removing hundreds of carp from the various ponds. Unsurprisingly there is very little biodiversity currently but hopefully this will return.

16. Parish Clerk Position

The clerk confirmed that the role had been offered to Maureen Collins, subject to references. Maureen had accepted the position and will liaise with the clerk about job-sharing and handover.

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

17.1 The clerk reminded members about the Rural Parish Conference on Friday – SP is attending.

17.2 The request for a memorial bench for Chris Newton had been previously circulated, and it was agreed that the clerk would send a copy of the Bench Policy & application form. Once received this will be included as an agenda item for discussion/approval.

17.3. The current spate of vandalism has been reported online and to the PCSO. The electrician has inspected and will provide a price for re-establishing the bases and any necessary repairs. The clerk suggested looking at alternative models and perhaps claiming on the insurance.

17.4 Community Orchard Grant for the next agenda.

18. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council, the AGM, will take place on **Monday 20th May 2024** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed by

Date: