

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 21 November 2022 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Rosalyn Day (RD), Lynda Roller (LR), Sonia Plato (SP), Geoff Thomas (GT), Jill Mitcheson (JM) and John Goddard (JG)

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

1. Public Questions

One resident wanted to complain about the council's process for speaking to applicants regarding their planning application. He objected to an unannounced visit for several reasons, and furthermore he had then been unable to re-contact the council before the meeting took place where his application was discussed.

The chairman responded by saying that councillors are not obliged to visit planning applications, but they feel it is a more personable and useful way to gain an understanding of an application before commenting on it formally. However, GDPR legislation means that contact details for the applicant cannot be given to 3rd parties, and so councillors must 'drop in' unannounced at the address, and if no one is there, they leave a note to try and re-arrange a time. It was unfortunate that in this particular case, it was during the summer and councillors had been absent on holiday and due to illness, and time had run out. The resident felt that communication could be via the post, but Cllr Day felt that this was a waste of money when all councillors live in the village and can easily reach the location. She further explained that the council had now reviewed the process and altered the note to include further contact details and the date of the meeting when the application would be discussed. She thanked the resident for pointing out some improvements that could be made to the procedure. He then left the meeting.

Will Kemp asked if there had been any developments on the carp illegally put in the pond. RD said that she had been in contact with the landowner who had contacted the Environment Agency (EA) and the police. He has also asked anglers not to put their catches back. SP said she is very concerned that the carp could get into the Rackwell and the Powdermill streams and she proposed that the clerk also report the matter to the EA. This motion was seconded and all agreed.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Gary Curtis, RDC and Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC. A recent update from ESCC is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

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 26th October 2022 as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

- 5.1 Carp in pond. See item 1.
- 5.2 Environment Group's plan for fencing. SP spoke to Tracy Hoad who was going to approach EA. Only along the front of the hedge not extended beyond. Will ask advice about the materials for the fencing and will report back.
- 5.3 Bench Policy - RD noticed that the bench has not yet been moved to Station Road and the clerk was asked to send a reminder to the Horticultural Society.
- 5.4 Hedge cutting – The clerk had reported to John O'Conner that the hedge cutting at the Rec car park was not satisfactory but had not heard back from them to date. Councillors suggested deferring their payment until they have finished the task satisfactorily. JG also noticed that the cuttings were left on the football pitch again and warned that the Football Club will also probably complain. RD felt that council should consider putting the grounds maintenance contract out to tender for the following year. The clerk will follow up.
- 5.5 Handyman Recruitment – The clerk had met with a contractor who has provided a quote for various maintenance in and around the Pavilion and playground. A second contractor had failed to turn up twice. RD asked for another quote for the larger tasks, and GT suggested that he starts on a trial basis, but not to delay any further with getting the work done. JG asked about invoicing for materials. The clerk will instruct Paul Smith from Finels Maintenance to start work and arrange for a key to the pavilion for him. She will source further quotes and investigate invoicing for materials.
- 5.6 De-fibrillators – the clerk has put the new paediatric pads in the phone box de-fib. The replacement de-fib for the Village Hall has arrived and she will liaise with Tony Barham for the electrical installation and make sure it is covered by the insurance company.
- 5.7 Matting in pavilion – the clerk is in the process of getting quotes for a 4.5m x 2.5m mat which has been approved by the caretaker and users of the pavilion.

6. Representations from District & County Councillors

A recent update from ESCC is attached as an appendix.

7. Financial Matters

- 7.1 The financial report to 31st October had been previously circulated and was approved by members.
- 7.2 The payments report for November was considered and approved.
- 7.3 The bank reconciliation for October 2022 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chairman.
- 7.4 First draft of the budget- the clerk is working on fixed costs for the coming year. She proposed switching energy supplier from EDF to British Gas which will save approximately £400 on prices quoted. Members agreed this proposal. Furthermore, she had re-instated the Cloudphone service and now has an app on her phone. The cost of £16.20pm includes 500 minutes of outgoing calls. There was some discussion about keeping a landline and the clerk offered to monitor usage and number of calls received for 6 months and then review the matter. There is no contract so the service can be cancelled at any time. RD said that as part of the budget process, the parish council should then review their priorities as a council.

8. Recreation Ground

- 8.1 The Monthly Update – LR had carried out the monthly inspection. There were no new issues, and hopefully the newly appointed handyman will repair & repaint where necessary. She noticed that there were some spiky weeds growing in the play area that should be removed. Residents had complained about dogs being in the picnic area and on the Rec. Members asked the clerk to arrange for some new signage.

LR also felt that the noticeboard looked rather sad – it was empty of notices and the door was broken. The clerk will add this to the list of repairs, and LR suggested some welcoming notices be put up.

RD asked the clerk to add the phone box door to the repair list too. She thanked JG for raising the area of footpath by the bridge and asked if there was some leftover material, could it be used for potholes in the car park and further along the footpath. The bollard lights timer had been reset by the electrician, but the fuse had then tripped, possibly due to a large amount of rain. RD suggested keeping an eye on the lights in case water is getting in somewhere.

- 8.2 Rec User Group meeting – the meeting took place on 7th November and the clerk had previously circulated notes. The Annual Fayre is moving next year from August to June and the clerk was asked to inform the cricket & football clubs and to check if there is normally a charge for the use of the Rec. Waiting to hear if it will be a permanent date move, or just for 2023.
- 8.3 Actions for the Recreation Ground - advice has been asked of both the EA and their Biodiversity Team regarding the request by the football club for an access path along the stream. After a brief discussion the clerk was asked to arrange a meeting with the football club and the biodiversity team from the EA on site to discuss the best way forward.

9. Emergency & Resilience Planning

RD offered to circulate the current version. When GT returns from holiday, she suggested they meet up to start updating the information. SP suggested contacting the nominated wardens to check if they are happy to remain involved.

10. Warm Hub Crowhurst

LR provided an update and thanked GT and SP for their support. There are many versions of Warm Hubs locally some with involvement from the parish council. It depends mainly on available facilities, funding and volunteers. LR met Annette Holmes from RVA who has provided information on funding options. 3VA from the Weald and Rother Rural Trust are providing one off grants. There is also a “Pub is the Hub” fund and there will be further conversations with the new owners of The Plough about the possibility of using the pub. However, this is a completely new project for the council and there are important questions to answer namely where it can happen, what it will look like, how to organise it and who it will be for. GT said that the village hall is heavily used during the week, but there is a possibility of some weekend use. Finally, LR reported that Edendale Lodge is already set up as a warm hub. It must be booked in advance, but for £1 they provide soup and a roll. It was decided that members should have further conversations with the landlord at the pub and talk to other local centres. The clerk was asked to write a report for the newsletter to alert residents to the facilities at Edendale and let them know that further information will follow in due course.

Warmer Crowhurst – SP provided an update from a recent meeting. The landowner is still keen on the solar farm, but UKPN can only import 1 MW to the grid, but setup costs would be about the same as for the 7 MW intended. Huw Merriman, MP was meant to talk to the train company about taking the power as the proposed site for solar farm is next to the railway – he is now a Rail Minister so this should be followed up. There were further discussions about a car sharing scheme (Crowhurst may be too spread out for this to be feasible), a very active group in London installing heat pumps (although without insulation and energy efficiency measures it's a waste).

They are still looking at funds to insulate the village and finally Energise Sussex Coast are offering free energy advice at the market in December. SP to inform residents.

11. Website

RD reported that the website host is moving to Amazon Web Services (AWS) as IONOS couldn't cope with coding element. She asked the clerk to cancel the IONOS membership. Councillors had a few comments about layout and some minor glitches, but on the whole thought it was vastly improved and thanked RD and her son for all their hard work. RD will change over the domain name and keep 'Under Construction' on the website whilst final tasks are undertaken. She will then need to liaise with the clerk about the calendar and other posts.

12. Planning Matters

12.1 New planning applications

12.1.1 RR/2022/2387/P – Hunters Moon, Crowhurst

JM reported on the visit she had made to talk to the applicant, and after discussion, the following comments were proposed for the clerk to submit and approved by all members:
Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application with the condition of no or limited external lighting (downlighters only) to protect dark skies as detailed in policy CE32.(v) of the Crowhurst Design Guide.

12.1.2 RR/2022/2305/P – Old Nursery Barn, Catsfield Road

GT had spoken to the surrounding neighbours who had no objections but had not been able to speak to the applicant. He noted that there was no pink notice visible and no letterbox at the address. However, there were no real issues aside from the reinstatement of some existing daffodils and the suggestion of a 5-bar field gate. He proposed the following comments for submission by the clerk and all members agreed:
Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application, with the condition that a 5-bar field gate is used in keeping with the location. Also, the reinstatement of daffodils on the two verges once the work is completed.

12.2 This item was deferred to the next meeting

13. SLR Meeting

The clerk will circulate minutes from the afternoon's SLR meeting with Highways representatives under separate cover. Items discussed included the feasibility study and/or bollards for a parking area on Sandrock Hill, 30mph repeater signs throughout the village and the 20's Plenty scheme.

14. Councillor Updates on External Bodies

14.1 Village Hall Management Committee – GT reported after the recent committee meeting. There were a few minor maintenance issues, and the adoption of an access statement. They have also introduced a feedback form for users of the Village Hall.

14.2 Policing Meeting – LR informed council that the recent meeting via Teams had been cancelled due to a technical hitch. The clerk had circulated the notes from a recent physical meeting with the police and SP offered to go through the Patrol Plan and update the village information regarding clubs and meetings.

14.3 Combe Valley – GT offered to provide a copy of the minutes from the recent meeting for anyone who wanted to see them. The main item to report was that the volunteer scheme has been extended and several volunteers are now successfully employed.

15. Clerk's Report

- AONB survey for the Management Plan. SP said that in the past the Neighbourhood Plan group would respond and asked the clerk to send it to Pat Buckle and Chris Davidson.
- The clerk will forward the other consultations on local transport, water resources and Rother's leisure & well-being provision for councillors' comments.
- Grass cutting Options for 2023 – RD asked if members agreed to maintain complete self-delivery (Option 3 no cuts by ESCC) and asked the clerk to submit the necessary detail before the deadline of 16th December.
- There were no items of correspondence.

16. Review of Council Policy

This was deferred to the next meeting, as time was running short.

17. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

GT had been approached by a local farmer about dogs worrying his sheep and he wanted to bring it to the council's attention. SP offered to circulate a reminder to residents to keep dogs under control.

SP mentioned that on Saturday 26th November between 9.30 and 3pm the Environment Group together with the RSPB will be planting replacement hedging and improving the verge on Forewood Lane. Road signs and other safety measures will be in place.

18. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Monday 19th December at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.55pm

Signed by

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Date: