



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 17th February 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

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

County/district councillors present: County Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC & District Cllr Chas Field, RDC.

In attendance: Maureen Collins, Parish Clerk and 3 members of the public.

1. Public Questions

Mr. Kemp attended the meeting to advise councillors that two of the recently planted tree saplings in the Community Orchard had been pulled up, and that the lights in the Recreation Ground had been vandalised again. He asked if the trail camera was currently operating and if we were likely to be able to see who was responsible for the damage caused. Cllr Thomas replied that the trail camera is not working as we had hoped, as the images are not clear. The Parish Council will be looking to improve and update the current system. Cllr Ashrafi has been investigating the installation of night vision CCTV at the MUGA, and we will examine the possibility of extending this to other areas of the Recreation Ground. GT noted that this sort of vandalism is not acceptable. The facilities at the Recreation Ground are there to be enjoyed by all villagers and it is unfortunate that a very small minority are causing disruption.

Mr. Kemp also advised that there is a life buoy in the Powdermill Stream, south of the bridge. He thought that it was likely to be the one missing from a pool on the marshes. He will attempt to recover it from the stream. GT advised Mr. Kemp to take care whilst doing this.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted from Cllr Koorosh Ashrafi.

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, Strolling Group & 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 20th January 2025 as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

5.1 Meeting with Yan Ernst (EA) – Mr Ernst had contacted the Parish Council to request the removal of the fence on the Recreation Ground to assist with the vegetation management of the Powdermill Stream. A meeting has been arranged for 21st February to meet with Cllrs Thomas and Plato and Tracy Hoad, our Flood Warden.

5.2 Dog Waste Bin – A 50 litre dog waste bin has been purchased from Pet Waste Solutions at a cost of £342.72 plus VAT. Installation costs are £130.00 plus VAT, with an additional £20.00 plus VAT for a

chestnut stake. The RFO will recover these costs from Combe Valley CIC who have agreed to cover the cost of the purchase and installation of the bin. The RFO has asked Pet Waste Solutions to advise on the likely date of delivery and installation. Rother District Council will be collecting the waste at a cost of £3.45 plus VAT, and this cost will be met by the Parish Council.

5.3 Councillor Vacancy – We currently have a casual vacancy for a councillor. The vacancy has been advertised on our noticeboard and website and is highlighted in the monthly report in the Crowhurst News. A resident has recently enquired about the commitment expected for the role and has been encouraged to return an expression of interest and to informally attend one of our meetings to meet with councillors.

6 Representations from District & County Councillors

County Councillor Kathryn Field reported that as part of the approved ESCC budget, residents will pay an additional 4.99% in the County Councils share of council tax, which includes the additional 2% for adult social care allowed by the government. East Sussex County Council has seen a huge increase in the need and demand for statutory services for vulnerable children and adults. Whilst the provision of these statutory services will continue, ESCC is having to stop some services dealing with drug and substance abuse.

District Councillor Chas Pearce reported that Rother District Council will raise their share of Council Tax by 2.99%, which equates to an increase of £6.11 for the year for a Band D property. RDC proposes to raise more income to fill the funding gap that will remain. The main method will be to add charges to car parks that are currently free of charge.

Cllr Pearce was pleased to advise that a lady in Bexhill has won £25,000 on the Rother lottery. The lottery, which was started in 2022, has raised over £88,000 with £45,000 going to local causes.

7 Town and Country Planning

1) To consider the following new Planning Application and provide comments to Rother District Council.

i. RR/2025/94/P Bynes Farm, Royal Oak Lane, Crowhurst, TN33 9BY.

Proposal: Conversion of a former agricultural barn into a new single dwelling together with associated landscaping and parking.

Cllr Plato had visited the applicants. She noted that the design of new dwelling appears to be a good one, which takes dark skies into account. There had been no concerns or objections from neighbours. After a brief discussion, Councillors unanimously agreed to support the application, and the clerk was instructed to submit the following comments.

Crowhurst Parish Council supports this application. If permission is granted, the following conditions are requested:

- 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.*
- 3. Any new hard standing is made of a porous material to limit run-off (see policy CE5 of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan).*

2) To receive an update on ongoing planning and enforcement matters.

The clerk updated councillors on the progress of the solar farm proposal. In a reply to an email to Cllr Pearce, James Laibach, Principal Planning Officer confirmed that following a further meeting with ESCC Archaeology, a decision is now likely in March 2025.

District Cllr Pearce gave an update on enforcement matter ENF/237/24/CRO East of Lower Wilting Farm, land adjoining Crowhurst Lane, Crowhurst – Dumping of hardcore/soil on the land. The clerk had written to Mr Bevan alerting him to further activity on the site on 31st January, requesting an update. When a reply was not received, Cllr Pearce had also written to Mr Bevan. He is still awaiting a response.

8 Financial Matters

8.1 The financial report to 31st January 2025 had been circulated and was approved by members.

8.2 The payments report for February 2025 was considered and approved.

8.3 The bank reconciliation to 31st January 2025 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chair (GT).

8.4 Retrospective approval was given for training for the clerk at a cost of £75.00 plus VAT

Councillors gave their formal approval to the upgrade of Edge IT at a cost of £94.00 plus VAT, which was necessary as we had surpassed our £100k income limit. Councillors formally approved keeping this increased limit in place for the next financial year given planned projects and potential fund raising.

The RFO had circulated information regarding a possible new account for our reserve balance. After a brief discussion, Councillors decided not to open a new account or transfer any funds at the present time.

9 Recreation Ground

i. The playground has yet to be inspected this month. Nicola Stell, who was present at the meeting, reported that the Recreation Ground was not being used much at the moment and that more issues arose at busier times. The defibrillators have been checked after a warning from the manufacturer that some pads may be out of date because of the unauthorised removal and replacement of the date sticker. Cllr Plato commented that the telephone box by The Plough, which houses one of the defibrillators, is looking very scruffy and that one of the lower panels needs repair. The clerk will ask the handyman to add this to his list.

ii. Cllrs Goddard and Laimbeer met with the new handyman. He now has the current list of repairs needed in the Pavillion, Recreation Ground and Playground. Mr Humphries will be asked to prioritise repair of the Recreation Ground lights which were vandalised over the weekend.

iii. The clerk had circulated three quotes for the repair of the surface of the car park. After considering the quotes and following a brief discussion, members unanimously agreed to accept the quote from CF Groundworks to complete the work at a cost of £350, with the Parish Council providing the planings. The clerk will contact Mr. Ford to discuss.

Following the granting of a new three-year ground's maintenance contract, Cllr Plato and the clerk met with Graham Cobb and Jason Bunting from John O'Conner. A couple of changes to the schedule were discussed and noted. The clerk will confirm the changes in writing and John O'Conner will advise if there are any cost implications.

A decision was reached for councillors to assemble and install the new picnic bench in the Community Orchard, as this must be done before the end of February. The diseased and dying Silver Birch tree will be removed at the same time. Cllr Pearce advised that this was planted as a memorial to a previous parish councillor. It was agreed that one of the new fruit trees would be dedicated to the councillor, Mr. David Cain.

10 Crowhurst Community MUGA

i. Cllr Ashrafi was not at the meeting to update members on CCTV for the MUGA.

ii. In addition to the quote received from JD fencing, the clerk had obtained three further quotes for the installation of a French drain around the MUGA. After discussion regarding the quotes received,

councillors unanimously agreed to accept the quote from CF Groundworks for £1,870, subject to the request that the work can be completed later in the year.

11 Neighbourhood Plan Review

On the 28th January the examiner, Liz Beth, sent questions for the examination of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Review to the Local Planning Authority and the Parish Council. The Chair, Cllr Thomas asked the Neighbourhood Plan Group to respond on the Parish Council's behalf. A deadline of February 14th was set, and the responses were made well within this. The Chair, Cllr Thomas, thanked Ros Day for all her hard work in providing the responses.

12 Annual Parish Assembly 2025

The Clerk is currently making plans for the Annual Parish Assembly. She will ensure that the first advertisement of the event will be in the March edition of the Crowhurst News, followed by a village email later in the month.

13 Community Awards 2024

The Community Award for 2024 was publicised in the February edition of the Crowhurst News, with a village email being sent out at the same time. The deadline for nominations is the 7th March 2025. The clerk has received several nominations and will send out a reminder nearer to the time.

14 Millenium Garden

Cllr Laimbeer had obtained a second quote for the repairs needed to the bank in the Millenium Garden. This was for more than £1000, for a repair using railway sleepers clad in chestnut. The clerk will ask Colin Ford of CF Groundworks if he would be prepared to provide a quote, and Cllrs Laimbeer and Plato will show him what is required and will report back at the next Parish Council meeting.

15 Highways

SLR meeting has been moved to Wednesday 30th April. This will be an in-person meeting. Agenda items must be submitted to ESCC by 16th April latest

We are still waiting for photographic evidence of the remedial works undertaken by the drainage contractor to the verge damaged when the drains were cleared. The clerk will contact Highways again to request that this is provided and to emphasise that the current state of the verge poses a danger to children and parents walking to and from Crowhurst C of E Primary school.

16 Pavillion/Recreation Ground Refurbishment

The deadline for the Recreation Ground Survey has now passed, and the responses have been collated and reviewed. We have now received three sets of plans/costs for the renovation of the Playground. Initial plans for the renovation of the Pavillion are progressing well. Tillmann Lenz will be coming back to the group with more plans. Rick Kirk has offered to look at any plans and give advice and Parker and Sons will undertake a free survey, if they can be included in the tendering process for future works on the Pavillion. Cllrs Laimbeer and Plato will report back to the next Parish Council meeting with plans to move the renovations forward.

17 Sunday Social

Sunday Socials have now finished for this season, with the last session taking place on Sunday, 16th February. It was a very busy session with many people attending to enjoy the good food and company. Alan Stainsby entertained us all with a fascinating talk about medieval weaponry, bravery and medical innovation. Cllr Roller presented the results of the survey she conducted on Sunday, 9th and 16th February and the group will meet later this year to discuss plans for next year. Cllr Roller extended her thanks to everyone who has taken part, or given up their time to help, or has donated. The clerk will

write a thank you note to all those who gave a talk/presentation. The Chair, Cllr Thomas, thanked Cllr Roller for working so hard to make the initiative a success.

18 Asset of Community Value

The Plough has been part of village life since 1805. The lease has recently come up for sale for the third time in five years. The property is currently 'under offer' but there is concern that if this happens in the future a buyer will not be found, and the building will cease to be an asset for the community. After some discussion, members unanimously agreed to go ahead with the registration of The Plough as an Asset of Community Value. The clerk will begin the registration process.

19 Climate and Ecological Working Group

Carbon Literacy training has been arranged for Monday, 10th March. It will take place at Mantel Farm, Henley Down between 10.00am and 5.00pm. The course is being provided by Community Energy South and our trainer is Matthew Bird. We hope to be joined by interested residents and Councillors from Battle Town Council. The clerk will contact Catsfield Parish Council to see if they would like to join us too, and she will send out a village email to invite villagers to attend.

Cllr Plato submitted a report on behalf of the Crowhurst Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group, a working group of the Parish Council, outlining the progress of the group during 2024.

20 Grant Application Request

Councillor Plato had previously declared an interest in the Youth Club and was unable to take any part in the discussion that followed.

Members discussed the Youth Club's application for a grant of £1000; £500 for paediatric first aid training and £500 for training for understanding autism. Tracy Hoad attended the meeting to answer any questions. The Youth Club intend to open the first aid and autism workshops to other institutions in the village. Members unanimously agreed to support the application.

21 Councillor Updates on External Bodies (if any)

Combe Valley CIC will be meeting next week, so there is nothing to report at present.

Cllr Thomas reported that the Village Hall Committee have cleared out the two rooms behind the stage and are sorting through the paperwork stored in the overhead cupboard.

22 Clerk's Report/Information for Councillors/Correspondence/Future Agenda Items

1. The clerk will be attending a training course on Tuesday, 11th March to help her make Effective Planning Representations. The cost of the training is £40.00 plus VAT. Members unanimously approved the training and the associated cost.
2. The clerk has contacted Network Rail and the grit bins in Station Road will be filled this week.
3. The Rec was vandalized this weekend (15th/16th February), and several lights were damaged and two of the newly planted orchard tree saplings were uprooted.

Cllr Thomas advised members that Sarah Blackford has arranged for a meeting of the Crowhurst Society on April 6th, to be held in the Church room.

23 Date of next meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Monday, 17th March 2025** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9pm

Signed

Dated

