



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 17th March 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: District Cllr Chas Field, RDC.

In attendance: Maureen Collins, Parish Clerk. There were no members of the public.

1. Public Questions

There were no questions from members of the public.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted from County Councillor Kathryn Field

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 17th February 2025 as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

5.1 Dog Waste Bin – The dog waste bin has been purchased, and we are waiting for it to be installed.

5.2 Councillor Vacancy – This continues to be advertised on the Parish Council notice board, on the website and in the Crowhurst News.

5.3 Fence alongside Stream in the Recreation Ground - After a meeting with Councillors, representatives from the EA, and flood warden Tracy Hoad, it was agreed that the existing fence would be removed and replaced with three/ four-foot stock netting after vegetation clearance works have been completed. The work will take place between the end of August 2025 and March 2026, but not when birds are nesting, or fish are spawning. Tracy Hoad also reported that work on the bunds was proving effective in preventing water entering gardens and potentially the house opposite the Rec, which are increasingly prone to flooding.

5.4 Damage to Grass Verge - Photos of the damage to the verge have been resubmitted to Highways, and Liam Reilly has forwarded the photos of the damage to the drainage team for comment. Previous photos of remedial work taken were unclear.

5.5 Registering the Plough as an Asset of Community Value - The Council is aware that Councillor Laimbeer is in negotiations to take on lease of The Plough and in view of this the Clerk will postpone discussion on the submission of the ACV to register The Plough as an Asset of Community Value - until a new lease holder takes ownership of The Plough.

6. Representations from District & County Councillors

District Councillor Chas Pearce reported that the main topic of conversation at Rother District continues to be Devolution, with an Extraordinary Full Council meeting being called for 19th March to discuss local government reorganization.

Cllr Pearce also encouraged residents to go paperless and receive e-notifications about Council Tax through Rother's e-billing service. It currently costs Rother £45,000 to send 47,000 bills through the post.

Finally, Cllr Pearce encouraged councillors to engage with the Rother Housing Strategy Consultation, which has a deadline of 31st March 2025. Councillors were pleased to report that the Neighbourhood Plan Group had compiled a response to the consultation on their behalf and that the clerk will submit this to Rother District Council.

7. Town and Country Planning

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

RR/2024/2229/PN3 The Granary, Lower Hill Farm, Watermill Lane, Crowhurst

Proposal: Application to determine if prior approval is required for the change of use of an agricultural building to 2 no residential dwelling houses and associated operational development.

This was previously considered under **RR/2021/2074/P**, although the application is now for conversion into 2 dwellings rather than one detached dwelling. Cllrs Plato and Laimbeer reported that on this occasion two letters of support had been received and there were currently no objections. Councillors agreed that they have no objections, and that if this is to go ahead, they do not wish to make any additional comments than were made before. The Clerk was instructed to a comment by the deadline of 18th March.

RR/2025/202/P Crowhurst Road – Land North of, Crowhurst

Proposal: Siting of 3no. glamping pods for overnight guest use, new site access and associated works.

Cllrs Roller and Thomas visited the site and could see no objections to the plans. The site is not overlooked or overlooking anyone. There will be three pods which will be clad with local materials and can be taken down and removed at the end of their life without affecting the local environment. Whilst they agree with the application, they would like to see steps taken to minimize any light pollution, and for all hard standing and pathways to be made of permeable materials. It was agreed that the Clerk will submit an appropriate comment on behalf of the Parish Council by the deadline of 18th March.

2) Community Solar Farm: Proposed PC quote in Press Release in the event of planning approval by Rother District Council. Cllr Plato read out the proposed quote from the Parish Council and unanimous approval was given for this to be used in press release to be sent out if/when planning permission is granted for Crowhurst's community owned solar farm.

Cllr Plato advised the meeting that she had received reports of drones being flown over the Continuation Pond, and that invitations to attend fishing parties there have been circulated via social media. The clerk will report this to the police.

8. Financial Matters

8.1 The financial report to 28th February 2025 had been circulated and was approved by members.

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

8.3 The bank reconciliation to 28th February 2025 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chair (GT).

8.4 Approval was given for the Chairman to attend the Power Shift 2025 conference at a cost of £65.00 plus VAT. There will be additional expenses for travel from Crowhurst to London.

8.5 Retrospective approval was given for the purchase of replacement date and time strips for the Annual Assembly signs at a cost of £45.00.

The end of year audit will take place on 3rd April 2025.

9. Recreation Ground

i. The Playground inspection had been completed by Cllr Laimbeer this month. She had nothing new to report.

ii. As it had been difficult to contact the new handyman, it was agreed that the Clerk will approach Catsfield Parish Council and Battle Town Council for recommendations.

iii. The contractor engaged to repair the car park has asked for a full load of planings to be delivered prior to his starting the work. Councillors agreed to the purchase of 19t of planings from Osmonds at Brenchley at a cost of £400 plus VAT. The clerk will liaise with Mr Ford once she has a delivery date. Notices will be placed in the car park giving advance notice of the works and asking car owners to keep the car park clear or to park alongside the hedge by the road, if they are unable to make alternative arrangements. The clerk will arrange for a village email to be sent out and for the preschool to be informed.

iv) The next Rec Users meeting will take place on Thursday, 20th March. Cllr Laimbeer had previously agreed to Chair the meeting.

10. Change of start time of Parish Council Meetings

Councillors discussed bringing forward the start time of Parish Council meetings. After a brief discussion it was decided that agreement will be sought at the May AGM to start ordinary meetings at 7.05pm, commencing with the meeting due to be held on 16th June 2025.

11. Crowhurst Community MUGA

i. Cllr Ashrafi was not at the meeting to report on CCTV for the MUGA. The clerk was instructed to contact Cllr Ashrafi to ask him to forward any quotes he has received for discussion at the next meeting.

ii. A meeting was attended by a representative of Active Rother and members of the Battle Pickle Ball Club. The Youth Club are keen to use the MUGA as they restart the Senior Youth group, and they will also be using the facilities. Arrangements for the Spring event were discussed and a MUGA WhatsApp group established.

12. Neighbourhood Plan Review

The final Examination Report was received from the examiner, Liz Beth in early March. The Neighbourhood Plan Group are now working on the modifications and will return the Final Version of the Neighbourhood Plan to Councillors in early April for agreement at the Parish Council meeting on the 14th of the month. Councillors would like to express their gratitude to Ros Day for all her hard work.

13. Annual Parish Assembly 2025

The Annual Parish Assembly will take place on 28th April. All interested groups have been invited and the event has been advertised in the Crowhurst News. A village email will be sent out shortly.

14. Community Awards 2024

Councillors discussed the nominations received for the Community Award 2024 and following a brief discussion a recipient was unanimously agreed. The clerk will make arrangements to purchase the award.

15. Millennium Garden

Cllrs Plato, Goddard and Laimbeer met with Colin Ford to discuss the repairs needed in the Millennium Garden. We are still waiting for Mr. Ford's quote.

16. Coronation Community Orchard

Five new Sussex variety apple trees have been planted in the Picnic Area of the Recreation Ground and a further seven in Muriel's Meadow to create a new orchard. This was made possible by a grant from the Coronation Community Orchards Scheme and includes new seating and an information board. The grand opening will take place on Sunday, 23rd March at 10.00am.

17. Pavillion/Recreation Ground Refurbishment

Jackie Saull-Hunt of Rother Voluntary Action joined us to give advice on how to apply for grants to fund our Pavillion/Recreation Ground refurbishment. Jackie advised that the RVA covers all of Rural Rother and will offer help with the funding and governance for the type of project the Parish Council is looking to undertake and will give pointers to 'tweak' any application with buzz words that the funding organisations are looking for.

Jackie suggested that the first place to start would be to consult the funding grid on the RVA website to see if we meet the criteria for any of the funding available. Consultation with the local community is seen as important when applying for grants, and councillors were pleased to report on the success of the recent Recreation Ground survey.

On a couple of more specific points, Jackie confirmed that there is money available for project management, and that where possible she would advise applying for grants before seeking planning permission. Councillors were very grateful to Ms Saull-Hunt for her advice and thanked her for attending the meeting.

18. Climate and Ecological Working Group

The Climate Literacy Training took place on Monday, 10th March, and was attended by Cllrs Thomas, Roller, Laimbeer and Goddard, the Parish Clerk and four members of the public. Many thanks to Matthew Bird, from Community Energy South for providing the training.

19 Councillor Updates on External Bodies (if any)

The Chair, Cllr Thomas, reported on the recent Combe Valley CIC Board meeting. Although there was nothing significant to report, technical changes were being made with Bexhill Town Council coming on board. All current projects and accounts are in order.

Cllr Plato reported that Youth Club committee members Gareth Bright and Stuart Ray are prepared to update the timings of the Recreation ground lighting if they are allowed access to a Pavillion key. Councillors agreed to this, and the clerk will arrange the purchase of a new key.

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

1. The clerk has received enquires from the Annual Fayre Committee, and Year 6 parents from the school to hire the Pavillion and the Recreation Ground. Completed forms will be submitted for approval at the April meeting.
2. Tracy Hoad contacted the Parish Council to invite members to attend the first aid training that is being run by the Youth Club on Saturday, 26th April. The clerk will reply on behalf of the Parish Council.
3. The clerk had received a letter from a resident with ideas for litter picking in the local area. The clerk will reply on behalf of the Parish Council.
4. Mr. Stephen Hardy, Clerk to Rural Rother Trust, wrote to the Parish Council with details of the Trust which exists to plug a small funding gap for individuals and community groups within Rother, up to a working maximum of £500.

5. Cllr Sue Burton, Battle Town Council has invited Crowhurst councillors to attend a meeting of the Climate and Ecological Sub-committee to take place on 14th May at 6.30pm.
6. On the 24th of February, following heavy rain, the Clerk received a report of blocked drains causing a rush of water along Station Road. Network Rail attended the next day to clear the drains, and they will be returning to clear some vegetation and reprofile a ditch on the embankment side of the road to help with water coming off the fields. Councillors would like to thank Network Rail and in particular Chris Page and his team for responding so speedily.
7. The clerk had circulated to Councillors a request from RDC to complete a survey which seeks to gather views on the proposal for devolution in Sussex. Cllr Thomas will make a collective response on behalf of Crowhurst Parish Council before the deadline of 12pm on 6th April.
8. The response to the East Sussex Rights of Way Access Plan will be made by Dr John Feltwell on behalf of the Parish Council. The deadline is 11th April.

21. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Monday, 14th April 2025** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.10.

Signed Dated