

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on
Monday 16th March 2026 at 7.05pm 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: Cllr Nicola McLaren, RDC.

In attendance: Maureen Collins, Parish Clerk & RFO and one member 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 Cllr Kathryn Field, ESCC.

3. Declaration of Interests

Received from:

Cllr Thomas – Village Hall Committee

Cllr Roller – Crowhurst Environment Group

Cllr Laimbeer - Annual Fayre Committee, Strolling Group, Drama Group & Crowhurst Environment Group

Cllr Sonia Plato - Crowhurst Environment Group and Youth Club

4. Adoption of Minutes

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the parish council held on 16th February 2026 as a true and correct record.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

Councillor vacancy – It was noted that the Council will co-opt a new Councillor at the April meeting. One vacancy remains on the Council.

Annual Parish Assembly- It was noted that all arrangements for the Parish Assembly are in hand.

SLR meeting – The scheduled meeting was cancelled due to the May local elections. The clerk is in the process of organising a new date in June.

Treeworks on Station Road – A meeting to discuss the closure of the road to allow tree works to be carried out by Network Rail will be discussed with Chris Page to take place on 8th or 9th May.

Paediatric First Aid Pads – It was noted that the Clerk had received confirmation from The Circuit that the defibrillator in the telephone box has both a child and an adult setting and therefore requires both paediatric and adult pads. The Clerk will order both sets of pads to ensure the defibrillator is emergency ready.

6. Representations from District & County Councillors

Report from District Councillor McLaren

Cllr McLaren reported that Cabinet has approved the proposed transfer of 71 community assets— including Battle’s Netherfield recreation grounds and Coronation Gardens—to town and parish councils,

subject to legal and financial checks, to give communities greater control and cut Rother District Council's costs.

The council will renew its infrastructure support agreement with Rother Voluntary Action, providing £38,000 in 2026/27 and £34,200 in 2027/28 (with a review before next year's budget), plus £30,000 over two years to support the Rother Age Friendly Network funded by East Sussex County Council. Cabinet also agreed continued funding for 1066 Country Marketing—£50,000 in 2026/27 and £45,000 in 2027/28—and ongoing project officer and management support to promote tourism and local businesses.

The draft Local Plan, proposing 8,427 new homes across the district, is out for consultation until Monday 23 March, and many sites from the call for sites will undergo further suitability assessment. In Battle, the Blackfriars show home opened on 28 February as part of a 200-home development (130 affordable) delivered by Rother DC Housing Company, while the Northeye site in Bexhill has moved from Home Office ownership to Homes England and remains allocated for housing in planning documents. Finally, officers agreed to review how our Neighbourhood Plan is reflected in published planning decisions; the Parish Council will produce a checklist for planning comments and will continue to remind planning officers that the Neighbourhood Plan and design guide must be considered.

Report from County Councillor Kathryn Field

Cllr Field reported that the County Council has got its Extra Financial Support from Government. This is £70m on a draw down basis at a cost of £6.6m a year. This is to cover the deficit of £55m and at the budget meeting it was not clear what the extra £15m was for. It was also evident that there was no clear repayment plan.

7. Town and Country Planning

Proposed upgrade to the existing telecommunications base station at Park Farm, Breadsell Lane,

To consider the consultation received from Cornerstone regarding the proposed upgrade to the existing telecommunications base station at Park Farm, Breadsell Lane (Cell Site Ref: 11202726), and to agree the Parish Council's response for submission to the agent within the consultation period.

Cllrs agreed that there was nothing to add at present regarding the proposed upgrade to the telephone mast; Cllr McLaren will contact Rother District Council to clarify how the process for applying for upgrades works, ensuring the parish is kept informed and can respond appropriately once further details are available.

Enforcement Update – Lower Wilting Farm (ENF/237/24/CRO)

To receive an update on the ongoing enforcement situation at land east of Lower Wilting Farm, Crowhurst Road, including continued reports of soil dumping, vehicle movements, and resident concerns. To consider next steps in light of limited progress to date, including the Parish Council's agreed intention to contact the local MP should the matter remain unresolved.

Marcus Berrisford (RDC) was due to revisit the site east of Lower Wilting Farm on 13 March to inspect ongoing reports of soil dumping, vehicle movements and resident concerns; he has agreed to provide an update to the Parish Council in due course. If the response from RDC is not satisfactory, councillors will again consider contacting the local MP to seek further action.

8. Financial Matters

8.1 The financial report to 28th February 2026 had been circulated and was approved by members.

8.2 The payments report for March 2026 was considered and approved.

8.3 The bank reconciliation to 28th February 2026 had been circulated. It was approved by members and signed by the Chair (GT).

8.4 Councillors approved the Clerk's request for payment of 12 hours' overtime worked since 1st January 2026.

8.5 Councillors approved the Clerk's claim for reimbursement of 44 miles travelled on Council business since October 1st, 2025, at the rate of 45p per mile.

8.6 Councillors agreed to the purchase of woodchips to replenish the surface in the playground. The clerk will chase AHS for a response to her enquiry and report back to the next meeting.

8.7 Councillors agree to the purchase of 10 adhesive date strips for the Parish Assembly boards at a cost of £48.00.

8.8 After a brief discussion, Councillors agreed to engage Mulberry & Co as our internal auditors for 2026/27.

9. Recreation Ground

- 9.1 Councillors received an update on the monthly playground and defibrillator inspection. It was noted that the inspection folder was with Cllr Goddard and has been passed to Cllr Thomas, who will carry out the inspection next month. The Clerk has produced a new inspection schedule for councillors; this was also provided to Cllr Thomas to place at the front of the folder. Inspection reports from Nicola Stell were not available as she is currently on holiday. The Clerk reported that the Grounds Maintenance contractor, John O'Conner, had contacted her to advise that their tractor became stuck on soft ground on the Recreation Ground, resulting in significant damage to the surface. The contractor has offered to make good the affected area once conditions have dried sufficiently. Cllr Plato commented that the area is currently "a real mess", and Cllr Thomas expressed concern about how long the ground may take to recover. Councillors requested that the Clerk contact Graham Cobb to ask whether, in future, the ground can be checked on foot before any tractor or heavy machinery is driven onto the grass.
- 9.2 Councillors considered the quote received from the Handyman following the leaks in the Pavilion. Councillors felt that as there are plans to renovate the building they would monitor how Cllr Goddard's cleaning of the mould from the walls in the Pavilion holds up as we enter the Spring and Summer Period.
- 9.3 Councillors considered the request from Crowhurst Cricket Club to allow Bexhill Cricket Club 3rd XI to play four 'home' matches on the Recreation Ground during the summer season. The matches will be played between 1:00pm and 7:00pm on a Saturday. After a brief discussion Councillors approved the request on a trial basis of one year at £45:00 per session.
- 9.4 Councillors received a report on the Recreation Ground User Group meeting held on 12 March. The meeting covered ongoing vandalism issues, CCTV options, progress on the playground and pavilion refurbishment projects, and general maintenance updates. User groups provided activity reports, and the 2026 events calendar was noted. Matters arising included the need to reissue the previous minutes due to attendee errors. Councillors agreed that the Clerk will continue to progress the actions identified by the User Group and report back on developments as required.

10. Community Award 2025

Before considering the Community Award 2025 nominations, several councillors declared interests relating to nominees connected with the Sunday Social initiative. As these declarations would have left the Council inquorate for this item, the Council considered and granted a dispensation under the Localism Act 2011 to enable the meeting to proceed. The dispensation applied only to this agenda item and ensured the Council could make a valid decision in the public interest. As Cllr Geoff Thomas had declared an interest in the nominations, Cllr Sonia Plato chaired this item for the duration of the discussion. Three councillors remained to consider the list of nominations submitted by members of the public to the Clerk and agreed a recipient for the Community Award 2025.

11. International Dark Skies Community Certification

Councillors considered the pre-application and the accompanying endorsements from CPRE and our MP, Dr. K. Mullan. It was agreed that the pre-application should be submitted on behalf of the Parish Council by Cllr Sonia Plato.

Resolved: Cllr Plato to submit the pre-application on the Council's behalf.

12. Pavilion Refurbishment Project

Members were unable to review Supporting Document C as none of the surveyors contacted for a quotation had responded to the request. The Clerk will seek an update on the quotes.

The Council then considered the two options outlined in Supporting Document A regarding the potential engagement of an estimator. Members noted the differing approaches and levels of service offered. It was agreed that Badger would likely provide a more personal and responsive service, and this was the preferred option in principle. However, Members agreed that no appointment should be made until the structural engineer has been formally engaged and their report received. The findings of the structural survey will inform the extent of any further estimating work required.

Decision:

- Agreed in principle to the engagement of Badger as estimator, subject to the structural engineer's report.
- Deferred any formal approval until the structural survey has been completed and reviewed

13. Recreation Ground Tree Survey

Councillors reviewed Supporting Doc B and the quotations received for the tree survey. A quotation from Curley Consulting had been received; no responses were received from the other contractors contacted. Councillors asked the Clerk to seek at least one further quotation, ensuring the scope and timescale match the brief, and to report any additional quotes to the next meeting. The Council agreed to defer appointment of a contractor until further quotations have been obtained and evaluated.

14. Network Rail Treeworks on Station Road

This was discussed under 'Matters Arising'.

15. Adoption of the ICO Model Publication Scheme (2009)

It was unanimously agreed that Crowhurst Parish Council adopt the ICO Model Publication Scheme (2009) with effect from 1 April 2026. The Council resolved that the Parish Clerk will publish the Scheme on the Council website, make hard copies available on request, and ensure the Scheme is implemented and reviewed as part of the Council's information governance arrangements

16. COUNCILLOR UPDATES ON EXTERNAL BODIES (IF ANY)

Resolve:

To note the updates and agree any associated actions.

Combe Valley Catchment Group: Councillor Plato reported that carp removal will proceed.

Representatives from the Environment Agency and an associate of Dan Sargeant attended and plan a walkaround of Crowhurst on 1 July, finishing at the attenuation pond.

The pre-school has asked the Youth Club for permission to install a boardwalk to assist a disabled child; a parent has offered to carry out the work, and the Youth Club committee has agreed in principle. The Parish Council confirmed it is happy for the boardwalk to proceed provided the pre-school's insurers cover the activity. Cllr Plato will feed back to the Youth Club and report the outcome to the Parish Council.

Resolved: Updates noted; Cllr Plato to liaise with the Youth Club and report back to the Council

17. Clerk's report/Information for Councillors

A resident has enquired whether part of the Recreation Ground could be made available for car parking to support a Celebration of Life event at The Plough, planned for this summer. Cllr Thomas agreed to contact the resident concerned.

18. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

19. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Monday, 13th April 2026** at 7.05pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed

Dated