

## Parish Notes for 2021/22



In 2022-23 we anticipate the council will spend £16.7 million for services in Rother. The cost of services in 2021/22 was £16.3 million. More detailed information on the Council's finances can be read in our medium-term financial strategy, along with past and current budgets on the Council's website <http://www.rother.gov.uk/article/1059/Budgets-and-accounts>

The Rother Corporate Plan 2020-2027 was adopted in July 2021. It has our vision of putting our residents at the heart of all we do. The plan incorporates 10 priority objectives and identified 23 initial projects. The plan can be found on our website at [Rother District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2027](#).

Some highlights over the year were:

### Waste and Recycling

The proportion of household waste that goes for reuse, recycling and composting has risen slightly from 50% to 51% based on current estimates.

Work during the year has been focused on reviewing the Government's draft UK Environment Bill which achieved Royal Assent in December 2021 and will positively impact recycling rates in the future.

A 'Rother District Litter Strategy' has been agreed which focuses on getting the 'Right Litter Bin in the Right Place' and work will continue on implementing the strategy.

### Environment Strategy

Completed projects in 2021 include:

- a) Training with our various partners in conducting tree surveys, the urban forest/Trees for Cities project, carbon literacy training and reviewing the carbon footprint and carbon reduction.
- b) 200 survey plots were completed in 2021 for our tree survey
- c) Engaging with local volunteers to complete the tree surveys
- d) Working with our contractors to facilitate bio-diversity, reduce carbon emissions and reduce energy usage.

The Council's Climate Change Steering Group has recently considered electric vehicle charging, carbon base-lining and other specific projects to reduce carbon emissions and increase bio-diversity across the district.

### Car Parks

The Rother District Council owned car parks task and finish group review which focused on the impact of the new Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) on-street parking scheme introduced by East Sussex County Council in October 2020, was completed in 2021. Changes to car park operating hours and charges were adopted in response to public consultation; residents were encouraged to submit responses to East Sussex County Council's CPE review by end of September 2021 and just under 1000 were received which is a huge success; and written feedback from the Rother review has been given to ESCC for inclusion in their annual CPE review. The task and finish group implemented various changes including designating long stay car parks with lower daily charges in Bexhill, Battle and Rye in August 2021 to reduce congestion and carbon emissions.

## Housing

- a) Between April and December 2021 83 new affordable homes were built in Rother and that figure will increase to over 100 new affordable homes by March 2022. In 2020/21 there were 77 new affordable homes, therefore, there is a supply increase.
- b) In December 2021, 1,867 households were on the council's housing list. This is an increase of 148 households since March 2021.
- c) From the pandemic, there is a rise in households applying for housing and placed in temporary accommodation. In March 2021, households in temporary accommodation peaked at 87 and held at 87 households by June, falling to 69 by December 2021.
- d) In 2020/21 there were 153 new homes (net) in Rother. Between April and December 2021, the district gained 172 new homes (net). (This figure is provisional pending the end of year review.)
- e) Blackfriars in Battle is a housing initiative led by Rother Districts Council. It will provide 200 new homes. Wates Residential our partner contractor is building the development. The project includes 42 affordable rented homes and 28 homes for shared ownership, starting in Spring 2022. In November 2021, the Blackfriars development was named best housing development in the UK (suburban and rural category) at the Inside Housing Development Awards. All new homes are designed to significantly reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- f) As part of the Council's Temporary Accommodation Support Scheme we have purchased 10 houses and flats for use as temporary accommodation, providing a dedicated support service to secure alternative accommodation.
- g) As part of the national pandemic response, the Council has actively supported the Government's call to bring all rough sleepers off the streets and into accommodation. All rough sleepers have been offered temporary accommodation solutions and we continue to accommodate over 25 rough sleepers who would otherwise be forced to sleep on the streets. The Council has stepped up to play its part in supporting the resettlement of Afghan nationals who are former employees of the British Armed Forces during the recent conflict. We have welcomed 2 afghan families to date and have a further 2 arriving in March.
- h) The council is now working towards adopting a new Local Plan by December 2023.

## Sidley Bexhill BMX Track and Skate Park

Planning permission has been granted and the two facilities are currently under construction with full completion expected to be in late Spring 2022. The improvements to the BMX track will attract enthusiasts from across the country to this ground breaking facility and will open up wider opportunities for local youngsters to train and compete in the heart of the most deprived community in Rother. The much awaited new skate park will provide a unique, challenging and exciting facility for our current local skateboarders whilst attracting new participants to this healthy outdoor sport.

## Community Grants

In 2021 our Community Grants scheme paid out over £150,000 to 23 completed projects, including £30,000 for Battle Health Pathway and £10,000 to Robertsbridge Cricket Club, as well as numerous small grants to celebrate HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The next funding round opens in April 2022.

## Accessible Rother:

Beach access matting was used at Camber Sands for the first time in July 2020. Camber Sands is a beautiful sandy beach but sometimes difficult to access for wheelchair users, those with mobility issues and families with children in prams or pushchairs. The matting sits above the sand, can be configured in different ways, and helps more people access and enjoy the beach. The equipment is getting a lot of use and the feedback is extremely positive. The council is working with access groups on this project.

Discretionary Disabled Projects Grants (DDPG) have been introduced to provide grant funding for community disability projects to eligible voluntary/community groups, parish councils, faith groups, and not-for-profit organisations. The grant is intended to support smaller projects that are easily deliverable, and which promote access to buildings and spaces for the general public i.e. access is not exclusive to particular groups or individuals. The grant is discretionary and as such is subject to capital funds being available, thus the provision of the grant may be limited or discontinued at any time. For further information, please see our website at [Discretionary Disabled Projects Grant – Rother District Council](#)

## **Age Friendly Rother**

In September 2020, the World Health Organisation approved the council's application to join the global network of age-friendly cities and communities. This was an important step to help older people in Rother feel valued, supported and lead healthy and active lives. As part of its commitment to becoming recognised as age-friendly, the council works with East Sussex County Council and Rother Voluntary Action to support and engage with older people in the district. Through the Healthy Ageing and Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE) project, volunteers have held over 200 hours of in-depth conversations with local older people about their lives, needs, and aspirations. The council, in conjunction with Active Rother, held the 'How to Age Well in the 21st Century' event at the De La Warr Pavilion to support over 50s stay healthy and active.

## **COVID-19 Support for Businesses**

Throughout the year the Government has continued to supply funding for businesses suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic. So far during 2021/22 the Council has paid out just over £9 million in business grants, of which £1,7 million has been discretionary awards where the eligibility criteria has been set by the Council

## **1066 Country Walk**

The walk relaunched in 2021. It brings history to life along a 31-mile footpath from Pevensey, through Battle and ending in Rye. The route has sculptures, new signs, and information boards about William the Conqueror and his invading Norman Army. The project was led by the council's cultural development officer and was only possible with the support and enthusiasm of landowners, local champions, tourist destinations and partners, working together since 2018.

## **Bexhill Town Council**

A Parish Council for Bexhill-on-Sea (subsequently called a Town Council) was created on 1 April 2021 meaning that the whole of Rother is now parished. The first elections were held on 6 May 2021.

## **An open council**

- a) All public Council meetings can be viewed online with links from our website.
- b) We have started a review of our customer service strategy.
- c) We are in the process of updating and modernised the Council's constitution.
- d) In 2021, the council gave local people an opportunity to have their say on a wide variety of local issues, such as: high street shopping areas, our budget and financial plans, our draft Corporate Plan, the Bexhill Bike & Skate Park, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Rother's public space protection order and anti-social behaviour and extending street trading in Bexhill and Ticehurst.