

Reports for Brightling Parish Council meeting 11 May 2022

Web site

The site continues to be hosted by Rother District Council.

The number of news articles published in recent months are

March	17
April	10
May to date	4

I am also in the process of adding a page with recordings of all the tunes on the barrel organ.

Conveyor belt

I haven't received any further information – or any further complaints – since my report to the March meeting.

Brightling Mine management said in March that they planned to upgrade the conveyor belt by (a) installing special low-noise rollers; and (b) adding sound insulation, with the work to be completed by the summer of this year. This upgrade would be for the Hollingrove Hill area - not the entire belt.

It would probably be appropriate to follow up in time for the June parish council meeting, to check that the work is actually in hand.

Broadband

As at 10 May 2022, there have been 140 residential pledges and 49 from businesses, raising a theoretical total of £563,500. This is 61% of the target of £937,513.

In theory there are 276 properties that could still pledge, and we could reach the target if about 152 of these 276 could be persuaded (this assumes that they all pledge at the residential rate rather than the business rate, and that they are all eligible for the ESCC top-up).

However, I have discovered that there are a lot of dud addresses on the list. I think there are about 36 dud addresses (eg properties that don't exist, or are duplicates of another property). Worse still, BT-Openreach erroneously included about 62 addresses that have already got full fibre broadband, and therefore can't be asked to pledge. If we subtract these 98 properties, there are 178 that could still pledge, and we would need 152 out of these 178 to do so. To put it another way, we would need to get the number of non-pledgers down to just 26.

Given that these 178 properties have chosen not to pledge after two mailshots (via Royal Mail), articles in local magazines, promotion by parish councils, major push via local shops and local champions, and door-knocking campaigns, it is totally unrealistic to think that we could persuade all but 26 out of these 178. There are inevitably empty properties, people who don't have a computer or smartphone, who are suspicious (quite a few of those) or just not strongly motivated.

My conclusion is that there is no way that we can hit the target of £937,513 worth of pledges.

I have therefore asked BT-Openreach to "re-cost and re-model" the scheme after correcting their mistakes. This re-think started on 6 May and is expected to take about 2 weeks.

Once we have the results of the re-costing we can see if there is a way forward. There are certainly possibilities but I don't think it is worth speculating until we see what revised numbers and ideas they come up with.

Meanwhile, I am telling people that it is still very worth while getting people to pledge. The more people who pledge, the more likely is that a re-costed scheme will be viable. And if we are forced to have a fragmented

collection of smaller schemes, your chance of being included may well depend on how many of your immediate neighbours have signed up.

Domain name

I made an offer to purchase the domain name brightling.org.uk for the parish council. The offer was made through an agent who specializes in negotiating domain purchases. The owner, whoever they are, did not respond at all.

I believe that the fact that we have made an offer which has been ignored puts us in a good position to use Nominet's Domain Dispute Resolution Policy (Nominet is the authority for uk domain names). The process is explained on their web site at <https://www.nominet.uk/domain-support/uk-domain-disputes/>

The clerk has previously pointed out that "Levelling-up" White Paper suggests that parish councils should be obliged to adopt a .gov.uk domain; in our case that would be brightling-pc.gov.uk or brightlingparishcouncil.gov.uk – neither of which seem very appealing. Even if we are forced to take one of those, I think that brightling.org.uk would be a useful community asset, as it would give a little more freedom than a .gov.uk address.

Environment strategy

I reported on the Environment strategy in my March report, and said that I planned to do a full review every 6 months. That would be in September.

A number of people have approached me in support of the idea of putting in an electric vehicle charging point at the Village Hall. There are government funds available to local authorities to help support this, but I understand that ESCC has not yet taken advantage of these. The latest statement that I can find on the ESCC web site says "We are currently developing a strategic approach". This is unchanged from 8 months ago, with no indication of when the strategic approach will be revealed.

This can be compared to Kent County Council's position, who announced in October 2021

"We're leading a project with 7 other Kent local authorities to place more charging points around Kent. Nearly 200 car parks have been put forward as potential locations with over 600 chargers being installed. We've already started and will continue installations until 2024.

"We are also working with parish councils, town councils, village halls and community hubs to install chargers in smaller communities around Kent."

Andrew Wedmore