

2024 Tree Warden Report
to
Brightling Annual Parish Assembly

Due to medical interventions, I'm afraid I've been more or less out of action for tree-warden-related activities this last year.

However, I did conduct some guided walks in Dallington Forest during the summer and late autumn. More are planned for this year so please either contact me (details below) or the organizer, Brenda Booth (brendaboothkent@aol.com), to be added to the Dallington Forest walks mailing list. Please be assured that no other use will be made of your contact details.

If you'd like to come on a walk in Brightling's woodlands or be involved in helping to organize walks in the parish, please let me know by phone or at the tree warden email address below.

As a Verifier for the Ancient Tree Inventory, I'm interested in finding and recording ancient, veteran or notable trees. If you are aware of old or notable trees in the parish then I'd be grateful if you could let me know about them.

If you have any concerns about a tree on your land and would like an unbiased opinion of its health, then please contact me for a visit. I can then put you in touch with relevant arboricultural professionals.

And, if you plan to plant trees, I'd be happy to provide advice to ensure the 'right tree' gets planted 'in the right place' for its long-term health.

Our parish needs more Tree Wardens and I'm looking for people with an interest in trees to help me. You don't need to be a tree expert, I'm not, just enthusiastic. And you don't have to become a designated 'Tree Warden' to be of assistance. Please contact me if you would like to help.

Doug Edworthy

Tree Warden, Brightling and Dallington Parishes
07711 090 925
treewarden@dallington.org.uk

BRIGHTLING CAFÉ

Report for Brightling Annual Parish Meeting – April 2024

Brightling Café offers local residents and others the opportunity to meet regularly and informally over morning coffee and cake. We always try to have a simple activity for any children who come along.

We welcome local produce stalls and there is no table charge at the moment. We have a regular cake, savoury and produce stall and other local people who sell their produce more irregularly.

Donations:

As we are a not-for-profit organisation, we donate any money left over at the end of the year to charity. In December 2023 we were delighted to be able to donate £50 to Sussex Air Ambulance and £50 to Dom's Food Mission.

The first cafe of the year will be on Saturday 27 April and then on the last Saturday of the month until November (except August).

The cafe is run by a small group of volunteers - we would always welcome more help.

Contacts:

Finance - christinewing123@gmail.com

Stalls & Volunteering - katrinablench@hotmail.com.

Brightling Environment Group

Report for Brightling Annual Parish Meeting – April 2024

Brightling Environment Group was set up in February 2023 to explore ways our local community can reduce carbon emissions and biodiversity loss, and tackle the challenges of climate change. We meet roughly monthly, and welcome new members - if you'd like to know more, or are interested in coming to the next meeting, email Andrew Wedmore at:

andrew.wedmore@gmail.com

In February this year we held our first event, 'Warmer Homes in Brightling and Beyond', which looked at ways to reduce home-heating energy use and costs. More than 60 people attended to listen to talks by the architect Joe Daley from Energise Sussex Coast on retrofitting older properties, local people their experiences of installing air- and ground-source heat pumps, solar and battery power, and from a local Energy Champion on using and thermal-camera imaging to identify cold spots in their home. Fourteen local properties have now had thermal image surveys showing potential heat loss; another five properties are still to be surveyed.

In March we were instrumental in getting Brightling Parish Council to adopt a Dark Skies resolution and our next events are to be focused on dark skies. As part of the Wealden Dark Skies Festival in October we hope to run night-time walks, dark sky quality meter readings and moth collections. Look out for details in The Messenger nearer the time.

Brightling Flower Show Annual Report April 2024

What a difference a year makes, the 2022 show was a barmy sunny day, the 2023 show was very nearly a total washout! In true stoic fashion, all our amazing volunteers, helpers and supporters came suited and booted in full wet weather gear prepared with what the day was going to throw at them – A lot of rain!

This did not deter people from entering their array of produce and crafts as the tent was full to the brim with amazing entries, highlighting the talented people of Brightling and surrounding area.

The Dog show was a huge success with all owners and dogs chomping at the lead to get to their respective classes. Sadly, due to the rain, the scurry part of the show had to be abandoned.

We had an array of stalls, selling a variety of local produce and crafts, which added interest to the show, and we aim to continue to grow this element of the show for this year's show. We already have booked a Falconry display, variety of stalls, The Warbleton Brass Band during the day and 21 Whiskeys band from 5pm – 8pm.

The children's games area proved popular as usual, along with the Bar, BBQ and Tea tent. Eventually, the rain did get the better of everyone and we had to abandon ship at about 5.30pm. Despite the weather, the Brightling flower and dog show was a success, and we have all our lovely volunteers, stall holders and attendees to thank for it.





Charlotte Emslie & Joanna Foy brightlingflowershow@gmail.com

Brightling Village Hall

Report 2023/24.

The past year has been another difficult period for the Village Hall. Capital expenditure (remote heating control, Broadband, and boiler repairs) has meant another year of loss for the accounts.

The contracts for Electricity and other essential services have been renewed, all at higher costs.

Broadband service to the hall has been upgraded to fibre provided in the area. Our thanks go to Andrew for his efforts.

The fabric of the Village Hall is good. Routine maintenance, together with our cleaning team keep things in order. A number of possible actions are being considered to reduce our Carbon footprint and energy consumption.

A recent survey of the roof structure indicates that we must consider its future renovation. This is likely to be an expensive process.

The Treasurer, Chris Wing, has stood down from the Committee and sincere thanks for all that she contributed over the last 10 years.

Samantha Durrant joined the Committee as the Treasurer. Sam has already made some important contributions to the running of the Village Hall and I am sure that our financial security will be maintained.

We also said farewell to Donna French, our Booking Secretary. Thanks to Donna for all her time and efforts over the past years. It will mean that there is an opportunity to explore new methods for handling bookings. An online calendar and booking system is now available via a link on the Brightling Community website.

There are 4 new members to the Committee. Dianne Mower, Bridget Greenwood, Alex Gadsby-Houlton and Philip Garbutt. Dianne is looking after Marketing, and Philip was voted in as the new Chairman at the AGM.

The film night on Friday 17th Nov was a great success. Many thanks to Alan Petty who wrote the book (The Kaiser's Last Kiss) for providing such an informative insight to the film – The Exception. 60 people came and enjoyed the evening.

The Village Hall ran one of the ever popular Quiz Nights on Feb 24th A fun evening with supper and drinks with questions set by Tim Ball.

These two events raised substantial and increasingly essential funds for the Village Hall.

The regular Local Lunches and the new Supper evenings are a great success with Joanna, Bev and their team of helpers able to donate to their chosen charities. The committee and Trustees are especially grateful for the very generous donation that Joanna and Bev have gifted to the Village Hall.

Brian stepped down from the Chairman's position after 10 years and he very much appreciated working with the lovely people who have given a lot of time and effort to keep the Village Hall in good order. He is continuing as a member of the committee.

Cllr Katrina Blench Reports

Brightling Annual Parish Meeting – April 2024

Environment and Bio-diversity report: A *Dark Skies* resolution has been passed by Brightling Parish Council.

“Brightling Parish will join a new regional dark sky initiative spanning Burwash, Mayfield, Goudhurst, Ticehurst and Wadhurst who are working with High Weald AONB to achieve certification as a 'Dark Sky Community' by 2026. The parishes will work together to align dark sky policies across the region, and to share resources, experience, costs of community engagement, and to apply best practices and lessons learned in developing a Lighting Plan for Brightling.”

Brightling Environment Group (2 Councillors are members) will be taking part in the Wealden Dark Skies Festival and organising events together with other parishes during October.

Rother Climate Strategy: Councillors have learnt from the Rother Climate Strategy that Brightling’s overall carbon footprint is high. The Parish Council recognise that our ability to lower our CO2 emissions and carbon footprint is limited given the Council’s minimal assets and buildings and the wider issue of the lack of public transport in the area. We think information dissemination will be the most effective course of action. So have suggested initially that Brightling Environment Group invite Dr Lucie Bolton (Rother Climate Strategy Officer) to give a talk about Rother Climate Strategy and the steps individuals can take to reduce their carbon footprint.

Footpaths and bridleways: The first two local walks - ‘Walk Brightling’s Byways’ - will be on Monday 22 April 2pm starting from Village Hall and on Wednesday 26 June 6pm starting from Fern Hill. Two more dates for later in the year to follow.

Contact Cllr.katrina.blench@brightling-pc.gov.uk

Reported to Rights of Way Countryside Team: Collapse of section of footpath 23 just before the junction with Bridleway 35a.

Welcome Pack: has been updated and is being proofread. The most recent arrivals in the parish were welcomed to Brightling with a welcome pack and a plant.



Report for Brightling Annual Parish Meeting – April 2024

It is an exciting year for the team as we have a new Captain, Kyle Richner (his Aunt has been our treasurer for almost 30 years and his Father Richard used to captain the side over 20 years ago) his vice captains are his younger brother Sam and Monty Hadow who is now 21 years old and has played at the Park since he was 11.

We have a good amount of members and are always looking for more.

You will see from the fixture card that we now play a local village tournament with ourselves, Ashburnham, Catsfield, Mountfield and Crowhurst village, the tournament has been running for two seasons and both times BPCC has come second narrowly missing out to Catsfield and last year Ashburnham and planning to go one better this year.

Hon. Secretary: Mr S Leeves
Tel: 01435 867865

President:
D M GRISSELL ESQ

Fixture Secretary: Mr Ricci Kent
Tel: 01435 830179 - Mob: 07919 035394
Email: ricci@kendalecatering.co.uk

Honorary Life Vice President:
D GASSON ESQ

Hon. Treasurer: Miss Melanie Richner
Tel: 01435 867865

Vice Presidents:

H Akerman Esq
T Ball Esq
D Beddard Esq
C Everett Esq
H C Grissell Esq
M Holman Esq
S Leeves Esq
D Logan Esq
A Magill Esq

F C Marshall Esq
A Nicholson Esq
N Pope Esq
A Petty Esq
R Richner Esq
M W G De St Croix Esq
D E Sewell Esq
J Wall Esq
K Winchester Esq

Umpire: Mr Neil Pope

Groundsman: Matt Le Mower

Captain: Kyle Richner

Vice Captains: Monty Hadow and Samuel Richner

Scorer/Data Input specialist: Dom

2024 Fixtures

Sunday April 30th			
Sunday May 12th	Crowhurst Village Tournament	Away	13.30
Sunday May 19th	Ashburnham Village Tournament	Away	13.30
Sunday May 26th			
Sunday June 2nd	Heathfield Park	Away	13.30
Sunday June 9th	Ashburnham Village Tournament	Home	13.30
Sunday June 16th	Catsfield Village Tournament	Home	13.30
Sunday June 23rd	Mountfield Village Tournament	Home	13.30
Sunday June 30th	Northiam	Away	14.00
Sunday July 7th	Bodle Street	Away	
Sunday July 14th	Sedlescombe	Home	13.30
Sunday July 21st	Mountfield Village Tournament	Away	13.30
Sunday July 28th			
Sunday August 4th	Catsfield Village Tournament	Away	13.30
Sunday August 11th	Late Nighters	Home	13.30
Sunday August 18th	Burwash Village	Away	13.00
Sunday August 25th			
Sunday September 1st	Harry Wills XI	Home	13.30
Sunday September 8th	Crowhurst Village Tournament	Home	13.30
Sunday September 15th	Buxted Park	Away	13.00
Sunday September 22nd			
Sunday September 29th	Battle	Away	13.00

You Are invited for after match refreshments at The Swan Inn. Woods Corner 01424838242

Brightling Village Trust 2024

What have we done in the last year?

The Trust exists to support charitable purposes in Brightling and can also make grants to help individuals and relieve hardship. This gives the Trustees discretion to support a wide range of activities which will benefit people in Brightling and which are not otherwise supported.

In recent years' reports, I have mentioned proposals relating to four other small Brightling charities. These are the Mary Herbert Educational Foundation (set up in 1728 to support girls' education), the Catherine Stone Bequest (to support the welfare of Sunday School children), the Jesse Gregson Charity (to provide bread to needy Brightling parishioners) and the FH Scott Charity (to support the poor of the parish including through the provision of coal).

In September 2021, we agreed in principle that the four charities should be merged with the Village Trust. The mergers were finally completed in late 2023.

As I reported last year, making the change turned out to be a lot more complicated than any of us had expected. None of us who are trustees of the Village Trust or of the other charities are experts in charities law or the hoops that we had to jump through to get Charities Commission approval. That is one of the reasons why the problem has hung around for several years. We therefore appointed an expert in charity law to help us through this. We were given a generous donation which will cover a significant part of the cost of this advice.

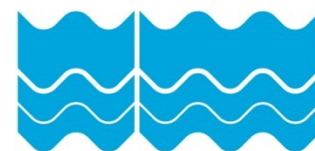
The objectives of the four small charities were important in their time but have become increasingly out of date. Now they are merged into the Village Trust, their funds can be used for the benefit of modern Brightling. Also, the world of charities has changed and is ever more burdensome. Even small charities nowadays must have policies on good governance, including safeguarding, conflicts of interest (tricky for a Village Trust focused on the village in which we all live) and reserves. Doing this for five trusts, with five sets of trustees etc, had become unsustainable.

On other matters, as in previous years, the Trust provided mulled wine and mince pies after the Village Carol Service.

We would welcome suggestions generally and for grants that the Trust should consider making, as well as donations and proposals for raising funds.

The Trustees are Mark Bridge (Treasurer), Charles Everett (Chair), Louise Dando, Henry Grissell, Brian Holliday and Nicola Magill (Trust Secretary). Bob Howells retired as a trustee in September 2023. Bob had been a trustee for over twenty years. We shall miss his calm and measured advice.

Charles Everett
Chair, Brightling Village Trust
April 2024



ESCC ANNUAL REPORT FOR BRIGHTLING PC APRIL 2024

Driving sustainable economic growth

Following a competitive tender process, a **new contract for highways and infrastructure services** with Balfour Beatty Living Places Ltd, began in May 2023. In June 2023, the Council approved additional one-off funding for highways in 2023/24, including £2.5m for carriageway patching work, £3.1m for drainage works and funding for carriageway repairs. Over the first three-quarters of the year, **70 road improvement schemes** were completed, over 19,000 potholes repaired, 132 patch works were completed across 62 sites, around 100 road signs were replaced and around 150 minor drainage schemes were completed.

As part of the Council's **Bus Service Improvement Plan** a number of projects have commenced including the roll-out of reduced price bus tickets, improvements to bus stops including the implementation of QR plates at all bus stops which can be scanned to receive next bus information, £10.5m of conventional bus service improvements to increase the frequency and running times of some services and the Flexibus service which now covers nearly 90% of East Sussex. 10,000 passengers have taken a trip on the Flexibus. In November 2023, a public consultation was launched on the draft **Local Transport Plan**. The plan looks ahead to 2050 and sets out how we will connect people to places through the county by walking, wheeling and cycling, using public transport, traveling by car, or by new ways to travel. In May 2023, the Council was awarded £1.22m from Active Travel England's **Active Travel Fund 4** to support schemes that encourage people to become more active and help reduce carbon emissions.

The **broadband** project eSussex completed its final build in 2023. Together with commercial investment this brings gigabit-capable coverage (1000 Mbps) to 67% across the county, with 98% of premises receiving superfast speeds of >30Mbps. In addition, the Council hosts the new South East Grid (SEG) network, which contributes to the provision of ultra-fast data network connectivity throughout the county.

The Turner Prize exhibition opened at the Towner Gallery in Eastbourne in September 2023 with 1,200 people in attendance. The prize, which was awarded in December 2023, has been instrumental in showcasing the county to a wider audience. In June 2023, the Council-led **Sussex Visitor Economy Initiative** and **Sussex Modern** launched the **Sussex Wine Tourism Plan for Growth** which sets out how the Sussex wine sector could grow from bringing £25m of value to the economy currently to nearly £300m by 2040, creating over 3,600 jobs.

Promoting **employability and skills**, over 1,000 pupils attended Open Doors workplace visits over the first three quarters of the year, supported by Industry Champions to gain experience of a real workplace. 226 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges by the end of December 2023. In addition, in October 2023, the East Sussex Careers Hub hosted the online 'What Next?' event connecting young people and their families with careers experts and local employers. The Youth Employability Services was re-commissioned with the new contract, which has a focus on young people Not in Education, Employment or Training, starting in October 2023. Over 1,600 people enrolled on Family Learning Programmes at East Sussex Libraries over the first three-quarters of the year. In addition, since 2019, the Council has committed over £1m from its apprenticeship levy to support local small and medium sized employers take on an apprentice.

Keeping vulnerable people safe

An **inspection of the Council's Children's Services** by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) took place in December 2023. The inspection report published on 6 February 2024, found that the lives of the most vulnerable children in East Sussex are improved by 'consistently strong and effective' support. The help, protection and care children and young people are receiving from the Council earned an overall 'good' rating, while inspectors found the experiences and progress of children in care to be 'outstanding'. This report is set against the context of rising demand for Children's Social Care services and increased complexity of needs. Increases in costs have been particularly acute in looked after children's care costs, in particular external residential costs (with average costs increasing by 13% between quarters 1 and 2) and support for children with the most complex needs.

Following extensive engagement activity with clients, carers and families, the Council published a new **Adult Social Care Strategy** in 2023; 'What Matters to You'. The strategy guides residents' understanding of what adult social care is, outlines six priorities and sets out how these will be taken forward.

The delivery of the **Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme** over summer 2023 was the biggest yet with over 21,000 sessions attended by more than 4,200 young people. 75 providers ran activities at 118 sites reaching more areas of the county than ever before. The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) element of the programme also grew with 14 specific SEND providers. Also over the summer, funding was made available to deliver positive activities to support young people with low attendance at primary school during their **transition to secondary school**. 313 young people participated with 86% saying they felt more excited about starting their new school.

Keeping vulnerable people safe continued...

Trading Standards were involved in over 1800 interventions over the first three-quarters of 2023/24 to protect vulnerable people, including installing CCTV and call blockers to try to prevent people from falling victim to telephone scams and as part of support sessions and training for vulnerable groups.

As of 31 December 2023, 1,762 guests had arrived in East Sussex under the **Homes for Ukraine** scheme, hosted by 812 sponsors. Over 600 people have subsequently moved into private sector accommodation.

Helping people help themselves

In 2023, the Council opened 11 **Family Hubs**, including in Eastbourne, Lewes, Hailsham, Peacehaven, Uckfield, St Leonards and Hastings. Visitors to the hubs can get support and advice from midwives, health visitors, early communications support workers, early years practitioners and more. Activity sessions give children, parents and carers the chance to socialise and support their children's development. In addition, the Council was successful in securing £7m of Youth Investment Funding to upgrade **youth facilities** in Heathfield and Peacehaven.

Reablement services are provided to help people to regain mobility and daily living skills, especially after a hospital stay. Between April and December 2023 95.1% of people who received short-term services did not request further support and between April and September 2023, 93.5% of older people discharged from hospital to reablement or rehabilitation services were at home 91 days after discharge.

Work continued on the **integration of health and social care** in 2023/24. A joint five-year Sussex Shared Delivery Plan was endorsed in June 2023 by the Council. The plan brings together delivery milestones for 2023/24 and a roadmap for years 2-5. This includes delivery of integrated community teams, operating initially in Hastings.

15 **road safety** schemes were completed during the first three-quarters of 2023/24 to improve road safety infrastructure. Over 3,700 people have also benefitted from 'Bikeability' courses.

In September 2023, ESCC partnered with The Tribe Project, an online platform and app that connects **volunteers** with local opportunities. There are now over 175 roles across the county. The Tribe Project offers volunteers flexible positions accommodating availability, location, and skillset. The Council's External Funding team responded to 220 enquiries over the first three-quarters of the year from the **voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE)**. The team has helped organisations secure £389,361 in funding over the same period.

Annually the Libraries team take part in the Summer Reading Challenge, to encourage children aged 4 to 11 to enjoy the benefits of reading over the summer holidays. This year East Sussex saw its largest uptake since 2018, with 7,198 participants. **Libraries** also provide free computer and internet access, alongside volunteer led 'IT for You' sessions to support people to develop IT skills. So far during 2023/24 over 1,729 adults have participated.

Making best use of resources in the short and long term

The Council's **budget and Council Plan** for 2024/25 were approved at the meeting of Full Council on 6 February 2024. Councillors approved a £538m net revenue budget for 2024/25 with no new cuts to services. The decision not to reduce services was taken despite the rising cost of providing them and funding not keeping pace. In setting a balanced budget, Councillors agreed to use £14.3m of the Council's limited financial reserves to meet the shortfall and to increase council tax by 4.99%.

The Council participated in a Local Government Association (LGA) **Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)** in June 2023 with the aim of further improving the Council's work. The subsequent independent report found the Council to be well-run and well-managed, open and approachable as well as a trusted and respected partner. The Council was also found to be financially prudent with a good record of financial stability and on the delivery of savings.

Over 2,000 people took part in a **survey on the Council's priorities and spending** from October to December 2023. 70% of people felt the Council's priorities were the right ones, with 60% of people suggesting that highways should be the priority for any additional investment.

The Council has continued to work with partners to deliver carbon reduction and our **climate change** plan. In 2023/24 this has included securing £245k to develop a plan to provide people with the skills to enable the retrofit of domestic properties to reduce their carbon emissions, £4.4m to support the installation of electric vehicle charging points in over 280 locations and nearly £300k of Forestry Commission funding for tree planting projects. Sixteen **energy efficiency** projects were completed on Council buildings during the first three-quarters of the year, including 4 LED lighting projects and 5 solar PV energy generation schemes. Total energy use in quarter 2 of 2023/24 was down 9% on the same period last year and down 25% on the baseline year 2019/20.

The Council spent £307m with 853 **local suppliers** over 2023, equating to 64% of total contract spend. In addition, during the first three-quarters of the year, 11 contracts were awarded which were in-scope of the Social Value Measurement Charter. These contracts had a total value of £4.9m with £1.3m of **social value** commitments secured, including apprenticeships, work experience, creation of local jobs, and local volunteering initiatives. This equates to an outturn of 27% of applicable procurement spend, against a target of 10%.

In September 2023, the **East Sussex Pension Fund** Team won the Governance Award at the Local Authority Pension Fund Investment Awards.

REPORT FOR BRIGHTLING ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2024

HIGHWAYS

It has been another challenging year for Brightling's roads. Heavy rain has caused further highway deterioration and left the Parish Council battling - along with with similarly afflicted local parishes - for the scarce maintenance resources of East Sussex County Council Highways Department. Last May the Council negotiated a new seven year contract with Balfour Beatty. One year on, and regrettably, we are not able to report any improvement in maintenance standards or levels of service.

THE PARISH COUNCIL AND EAST SUSSEX HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT

The Parish Council meets representatives from East Sussex Highways at six weekly intervals to flag up local problems. Over the past year we have also held site meetings to discuss issues of particular concern - sadly, with negligible results. In February the Parish Council wrote to County Councillor Claire Dowling, Lead Cabinet Member for Highways, voicing frustration at the Department's maintenance strategy and service levels and inviting her to attend a meeting. Two holding replies have now been received, but no response to the invitation (the letter is reproduced below).

Of particular concern are:

DRAINS

Regularly-cleared, accessible drains would siphon off the standing flood water that allows potholes to form and would divert the running water that erodes the carriageway edges. East Sussex Highway's general policy is to clear drains only once every three years. Brightling should, therefore, consider itself fortunate that some of our drains are on a two year clearing cycle and some on a one year cycle. Unfortunately, our monitoring shows that drains are often inadequately cleared or missed out from the cleaning cycle.

POTHoles

We are all only too aware that the general state of the roads and the number of potholes is worse than ever. The Highways Department specifies certain criteria a pothole must meet before it reaches their intervention level. The Parish Council continues to report potholes around the village to the local Highways Steward who then assesses whether they should be repaired (indicated by white spray paint). The steward's response is usually quite quick. More often than not though, the resulting repair is seen as 'safety measure' funded out of the Highways Department's 'reactive maintenance' revenue.

The problem is, that when larger and more permanent repairs are called for, they come out of capital expenditure and are carried out according to priority. The waiting list for a permanent repair can be a couple of years. We all know the result: more and more unsatisfactory repairs that don't last.

REPORTING HIGHWAYS PROBLEMS

The more often a problem is reported, the more likely it is to be seen to. The most effective way to report matters is via East Sussex's website at <https://live.eastsussexhighways.com/report-problem> which will allow you to identify the location of the issue on their interactive map. You will receive a unique reference number for your report, which will then be sent directly to the local Highway Steward who will carry out an inspection. Once the inspection has taken place, you will receive an update from the system of the Steward's findings. You will be given the option to register an account, to monitor all reports you have made, but this is not required to receive updates on individual reports. Alternatively, you can report matters anonymously; however, they will be unable to provide you with any updates on your enquiry in this case.

Should you wish to speak to a Customer Service Advisors directly, you can also call on [0345 60 80 193](tel:03456080193).

Cllr Judy Petty.

Letter to Councillor Dowling (ESCC) 2/2/24:

Dear Councillor Dowling,

I write on request of Brightling Parish Council (BPC) to raise concern and frustration about the poor state of the Parish s highways and drainage.

Whilst BPC has been proactive in seeking regular update and communication from Balfour Beatty and has established productive Stakeholder meetings, it remains the case that the road surfaces, edges and drains in Brightling are deteriorating faster than can be repaired. The state of the road and drainage network continues to be a significant issue for local residents.

Through updates from RDC Councillor Barnes and ESCC Councillor Kirby-Green, we are aware that Brightling is not an isolated case, and that issues are county-wide. However, BPC is concerned that the focus on temporarily filling potholes meeting threshold for intervention in order to reduce overall numbers, rather than focussing on quality, lasting repairs in the first instance, is costly, inefficient and ineffective. Certainly on local roads in and around Brightling, quite significant potholes are being filled (often promptly, once reported), but to such a low standard that within days or weeks, the issue has returned. Although superficially reducing risk to drivers, the temporary filling of potholes, only for them to reappear in quick

succession, is counterproductive; temporary repairs tend to fail suddenly and without much warning, causing unpredictability for road users. It is not just potholes; there are large stretches of deteriorating and/or failed road surfaces throughout the Parish's lanes, with road edges severely compromised by poorly maintained drains causing excessive water runoff.

Through our meetings with Balfour Beatty, we are aware that there are issues with their mapping and logging systems and real inefficiencies in the scheduling of maintenance routes. For example, a single stretch of road in the Parish may have some drains on a more frequent clearing schedule, some on a longer cycle, and others missing from the map altogether. There appears to have been issues regarding a full and proper data transfer from Costain to Balfour Beatty; a local resident recently informed Councillors at the January BPC meeting that records of previously completed works and scheduled future works were lost during the contract handover, meaning that Balfour Beatty, to a large extent, are often operating inaccurate maintenance schedules and routes.

Clearly, the maintaining of the County's roads is a major issue and expense for ESCC. However, BPC remains unconvinced that the current strategy of patch repairs, rather than substantive investment in quality repair and maintenance, is either effective or representative of good value for money - certainly for the residents of Brightling.

BPC wishes to extend an open invitation to you to address a future meeting of the Council to discuss the long term strategy for improving highways and drainage in the Parish. Specifically, BPC requests information regarding:

- The number of temporary repairs completed, including the number of repairs that are revisited/fail.*
- The number of temporary vs. substantive repairs completed.*
- The criteria required for substantive repairs to take place.*
- The medium to long-term strategy for maintaining and repairing the drainage network, as this is recognised as a major contributor to road surface failures.*
- The handling of data transfer from Costain to Balfour Beatty, and whether data records were lost in this process.*
- BPC is in possession of the current Balfour Beatty contract and is aware of the KPIs/success criteria specified to evaluate and monitor contract efficacy. BPC requests evidence that these are being applied and monitored to ensure the contract meets the requirements set out and provides a good level of service for residents.*

I appreciate that Brightling is one of many Parishes experiencing these challenges, and I do not doubt that you receive regular correspondence as such. That said, BPC would be highly appreciative of a response regarding the above, and I repeat the open invitation to address the Council at a future date.

*Kind regards,
Sam*

Mr Sam Dugan
Clerk to Brightling Parish Council & RFO

Response from Ruby Brittle (ESCC) 9/4/24:

Dear Sam, thank you for your patience whilst I pulled the information on this matter together. I am really sorry but the team have not been able to fully complete the response due to some data issues. The team need to do a little more work on the system to get the information in a readable format. So for now, and so you have something for your meeting I have provided what we have got as a starting point. I hope this is useful and we will get the outstanding info over to you ASAP.

In response to question one and two:

Since May 2023, 25,771 potholes have been repaired across the County. The team are working on breaking this information down further as mentioned above to give the Parish Council an indication of the breakdown of both temporary and permanent repairs. In terms of those that need to be revisited, this around 10-15% depending on weather and time of year.

In response to Question three:

Our planned maintenance programme of major work, such as resurfacing and other works that will prolong the life of the highway (Capital projects) is based on a long-term, strategic 'asset management' approach that aims to minimise the need for costly repairs in the long run. It considers the whole lifecycle of each part of the highway to identify the best times for interventions. This is set out in our Highway Asset Management Strategy which can be read in its entirety here:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roads-transport/roads/roadschemes/policies/highway-maintenance> .Our approach not only maximises value for money, ensuring informed investment decisions can be made, but also manages risk and maintains a highway environment that is safe, secure and accessible for people travelling in East Sussex.

In response to Question 4:

We are in the process of reviewing and creating individual Infrastructure Asset Management Plans, including Drainage. The completed plan will set out our approach for medium and long term management of the drainage asset. It will clearly state that East Sussex Highways is responsible for ensuring that rainfall flows away from road and pavement surfaces into the highway drainage system. The plan will be informed by the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice We have extensive data regarding the locations of all our gullies across the county, and we are continuing to build on this, including details of the location of all other drainage assets across the county (including locations of all interconnecting pipes, manholes and outfalls) To help prevent highway floods, we carry out regular cleansing of the gullies, and where necessary we clear the connecting pipework. We clean all roadside drainage gullies at least once every three years. Rather than clear all gullies the same number of times each year, we have optimised our gully emptying frequencies. This means that we empty those gullies that often become blocked more frequently than those that don't. Quite often our drains become blocked by silt, debris or 2 tree roots. Where this happens, our team will undertake clearance works utilising high pressure water jetting and root cutting equipment. At known drainage 'hot spots' that regularly flood, we are undertaking a programme of detailed drainage investigation where we will use CCTV equipment to record images of the condition of the drainage pipework. Once the problem is identified, we may be able to clear the pipe and where possible it will be re-lined, so that the drainage system can adequately function again. On some

occasions, the drainage pipes will have broken completely. Where this is the case, we will replace the broken pipe with new sections.

In response to question 5:

No data was lost in the transfer between Costain and Balfour Beatty. The data from Costain's contract is still available to the county council, and the relevant data has been made available to BBLP. BBLP are able to make their own decisions on which parts of this 'legacy' data to import into their systems.

In response to question 6:

The SPI results for the year are not yet complete, with the contract year ending on March 31, there is still some time for us to collate all outstanding data to have the final performance score. A performance report will be available around July and will be presented to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. This will demonstrate the information being requested.

I hope this information is helpful.

Many thanks

Ruby Brittle (Pronouns She/Her)

Stakeholder and Engagement Team Manager Contracts Management Group - Communities,
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The Messenger Magazine

Report for Brightling Annual Parish Assembly – April 2024

The Messenger magazine is in good shape financially. About 400 copies are delivered by hand to subscribers in the four villages of Brightling, Dallington, Mountfield and Netherfield.

Following the retirement of Mel Willis-Fleming from the role of editor, we now have a system of "village editors" - one or two for each of the four villages. The village editor for Brightling is Jane Beard and all contributions to be considered for inclusion should be emailed to her using the address:

brightling.messenger@gmail.com

The local news from each village is the core of the magazine, and we are totally reliant on you, the readers, to send in information about your village.

We would also welcome anyone who wants to get more involved with the management of the magazine. Our committee meets about 4 times per year, to set the overall direction of the magazine.

Please email darwell.messenger@gmail.com if you are interested.

ROTHER DC ANNUAL REPORT TO BRIGHTLING PARISH COUNCIL

APRIL 2024

January 2023

The Council started the new year by urging residents and businesses to take part in a budget consultation, as the authority continued to face increasing demands on its finances.

A new requirement for voters to show photo ID when they vote was highlighted. Residents were warned the new rule would apply for the first time in the May 2023 local elections.

January ended with some fantastic news, as the authority was told it had been awarded over £19 million for community, creativity, and skills in Bexhill. The investment, from the Government's Levelling Up Fund would be used to support two major projects at the De La Warr Pavilion and in Sidley.

February

This month the Council highlighted its work to keep the district tidy with the removal of unsightly graffiti at several sites, and by encouraging smokers to dispose of cigarette butts in the right way. The Council also promoted its green credentials with the launch of a new energy improvement project for village and community halls across the district.

Cabinet met at the end of the month to agree items including community grants of more than £40,000 for groups in Battle, Burwash, Icklesham and Staplecross, the extension of a contract for Citizens Advice with £85,000 of additional funding, and progress being made on the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

March

In March, the Council launched a special £10,000 grant for community groups looking to celebrate the Kings Coronation in May. Further good news was the confirmation that the district had been chosen as one of 20 new Levelling Up Partnership areas and would benefit from a share of the £400m UK fund.

This month also saw the authority addressing some difficult issues. The Council continued its negotiations on the devolvement of public conveniences to town and parish councils and issued a joint statement with East Sussex County Council on the Government's proposed plan to use the Northeye site as a centre for people seeking asylum.

April

The forthcoming May elections took centre stage with another step in the process ahead of residents going to the polls. The authority published its 'Statement of Persons Nominated for the District & Parish Elections' online allowing people to check those standing in each ward.

It was another example of the work of the authority promoting the elections which has included the election timetable, including deadlines for registering to vote and voting by post, plus Photo ID needed in polling stations, and the LGA debate not hate campaign.

The Council also kicked off its annual work to promote safety, protection of the environment, and respect for local communities at Camber and along the rest of the district's coast.

May

The District Council and Parish Council elections took place on Thursday 4 May and results were announced at the election count held at the De La Warr Pavilion on Friday 5 May. On the day of the count, the Council published results as they came in on its website and on social media.

June

In June, the issue of public open spaces was on the agenda. The Council launched a consultation on proposed changes to dog controls in public spaces and highlighted the need for budget savings with proposals to change grounds maintenance.

The issue of Northeye again came up this month, with Council Leader Doug Oliver releasing a statement to confirm that the Government had changed its plans and would not be opening the proposed centre in September 2023 but the plans remain on the table.

The Council's Cabinet met and approved items including continuing with the enforcement of certain environmental offences - such as dog-fouling and littering. Cabinet also confirmed the Council's Net Zero pledge and its membership of UK100 – a network of UK local authorities who have pledged to reach Net Zero by 2030.

July

The Council helped to celebrate the completion of 15 new affordable homes for local people in Icklesham. The Council joined Hastoe Housing Association, the Icklesham Parish Community Land Trust, Icklesham Parish Council, Sussex Community Housing Hub and other partners to mark the project.

Egerton Park in Bexhill was again recognised as one of the country's best parks for the eleventh consecutive year.

August

Lorna Ford was confirmed as the Council's new Chief Executive. The Council welcomed its first cohort of energy champions – volunteers who will train others to reduce their energy bills and save money. August also saw the Council continuing its work to maintain the electoral register by asking residents across the district to check their details and ensure they do not miss out when it comes to voting in local elections.

September

There was good news for people in the Rye area this month with the announcement that Rye Pool was set to reopen in October. The Council and its partners had worked tirelessly to make the facility available again for local people after soaring energy costs forced its closure in 2022.

Community groups and projects in Battle, Bexhill and Winchelsea were among the beneficiaries of the latest round of District Council community grants with close to £20,000 being handed out. A local eyesore in Bexhill got a welcome makeover as National Highways confirmed it had completed the Ravenside roundabout improvements.

October

In October, due to budget savings, the Council introduced a trial closure of public toilets over the winter months in Battle, Bexhill, Pett Level, Sedlescombe and Rye. The Council took the decision as it faced a £3.8 million shortfall in its budget.

At its Cabinet meeting, the authority discussed various issues including the Council Tax Support Fund, cash payments in car parks, dog controls, and CCTV cameras.

The month also saw the authority highlight its work to get people of all ages active and healthy. The Council promoted a national rugby play programme called Rugby tots for pre-school and primary school aged children to take part in rugby-themed activities.

November

The Council launched a wide-ranging consultation on its budget situation. Using all its communication channels, the authority urged residents and businesses to have their say on how the Council manages its finances as soaring costs and extra demands for services help to create a £3.8m funding gap.

Towards the end of the month, the Council started its annual 'Love Local' campaign, urging people to shop and eat locally in the run up to Christmas. The campaign, which includes input from businesses themselves was boosted with the announcement that once again free parking would be available on set days in council-run car parks during the festive period.

December

The last month of the year saw continued activity on Rother's budget consultation and Love Local campaigns, and at a Cabinet meeting councillors discussed the Council's Climate Strategy and how its aims would be implemented over the coming months and years. At the same meeting, cabinet members were told that the authority had received £76,000 from DEFRA's Coronation Living Heritage Fund, for tree planting, community orchards and biodiversity work across the district.

And so far in 2024 the Council has...

- Announced £300,000 rural business grant
- Held a Rother Housing event attended by 80 industry and partner delegates
- Completed a successful budget consultation resulting in over 700 responses
- Set its budget with £15m to be spent on services and a 2.99% council tax rise
- Agreed to hold consultations on both the Local Plan and on anti-social behaviour on beaches
- Announced the latest round of community grants with £66,000 for projects in Bexhill, Crowhurst, Icklesham and Three Oakes

And finally...

The authority is also looking forward to highlighting its 50th anniversary in 2024!