

**Minutes of the meeting held on 10th April 2019 at 2.30pm
on the Ground Floor,
The Emmanuel Centre, Harrier Lane, Battle TN33 0FL**

Present: David Pankhurst (Peasmarsh) (**RALC Chairman**), Peter Turner (**RALC Vice Chairman**), Lesley Bannister (Brede), Deena Best (Safe from Harm Project), Ruby Brittle (East Sussex Highways Stakeholder & Engagement Manager), Pauline Collins (Fairlight), Gill Colquhoun (RALC Secretary), Keith Datchler (Battle Wildflower Group), Michael Edwards (Westfield), Pauline Glew (Sedlescombe), Jacqui Harding (Northiam), Ann Henson (Battle Wildflowers), Issy Horsley (Fairlight), Margaret Howell (Battle), Malcolm Johnston (Rother District Council), Amanda Kerr (Battle Wildflower Group), Les Nottage (Brede), Hilary Pankhurst (Peasmarsh), Kim Richards (Rural Community Services Team Leader, Action in Rural Sussex), Karen Ripley (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), David Smedley (Icklesham), Alan Stainsby (Crowhurst), David Stone (Playden), Bob Turgoose (Udimore), Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe)

1 Self Introductions were made.

2 Apologies for absence

Valerie Ades (Beckley), John Bradford (Camber), Annette Childs (Etchingham) Lisa Cooper (RDC), Ann Cook (Ticehurst), Judith Dean (Pett), Janet Ellis (Hurst Green), Richard Farhill (Rye and Ewhurst), David Furness (Battle), Graham Furness (Guestling), Inspector Jonathan Hartley (Sussex Police), Michael Horley (Westfield), David Perrett (Guestling), Mary Philo (Pett), Mike Rowe (Beckley), Andrew Wegmore (Brightling)

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019, were **agreed** with no amendments and duly signed by the Chairman.

4 Matters arising from meeting held on 9 January 2019

Malcolm Johnston asked that the member who had requested that he investigate why new numbers had been assigned to houses in their parish contact him to discuss further.

5 Timing of Future meetings

A request to hold some RALC meetings in the evenings to enable Councillors in full employment to attend was discussed. It was proposed to change the next meeting to 5.30pm on Thursday 11th July. (The meeting day changed to fit Emmanuel Centre availability). Members voted on this proposal which was **carried** (10 votes to 3). *See Item 14 for update.*

6 Finance

- **To receive update as at end 31 January 2019** The position at 31 January was noted as attached (the Clerk highlighted an error – the draft statement, balance at 31 March 2019 should read £3220.52). The March figures are draft, pending receipt of a March bank statement.
- **To agree subscriptions for 2019-20** Members **agreed** to keep RALC subscriptions at the same rate as 2018/19. It was confirmed that fees are variable, dependent on size of Parish.
- **To discuss renewal of Online Mapping.** Geosphere had provided an estimated renewal price for the year beginning August 2019 for all RALC members for £1197.60. A paper had been circulated by the Clerk showing a potential cost of £57 for all current RALC subscribers (21 parishes). Only a few Parishes had responded to an email for the clerk asking if they wished to subscribe for a further year from August 2019. The Clerk was asked to email all Parish Clerks again asking for confirmation by June of their commitment to renew as part of the RALC joint subscription. Parishes were asked to discuss at their Parish Council meetings. The resulting cost, shared between those wishing to resubscribe, would then be circulated so that a final

decision on the renewal would be made at the next RALC meeting in July. It was felt that a training session could be useful; the Chair volunteered to contact Geosphere to negotiate the cost of training. Members were reminded that online tutorials are very helpful. It was confirmed that Geosphere are investigating adding Rother and East Sussex Rights of Way layers to Online Mapping. The Clerk proposed to invoice parishes for subscriptions and Online Mapping together in August.

7 Sussex Police

Inspector Jonathan Hartley emailed his apologies; he had been required to attend a serious police incident at short notice.

8 Highways matters (ESCC)

ruby.brittle@eastsussex.gov.uk

Ruby Brittle East Sussex Highways Stakeholder & Engagement Manager updated the meeting on the refreshed community highways project; Highways are making efforts to improve communication around the project. If there are any queries relating to Community Highways Ruby asked that these be sent to her, contact details are available on the website. It is a simplified offer outlined on the Highways website:

1. Community extras – reduced options, with additional services for small items such as grit bin refills, handyman availability, and additional requests.
2. Community Match (match funding process) continues. This is where Parishes can apply for up to 50% funding on larger projects, but it is now capped at up to £50K for each project. Ruby will attend SLR/parish meetings if there are potential projects Parishes would like to take forward.
3. Local delivery – empowering communities to deliver through volunteering groups, to include sign cleaning, bulb planting, planters, but not pot hole filling. A guidance document is available on the website.

Alan Stainsbury (Crowhurst) requested confirmation as to whether the offer covered drain maintenance, it was confirmed there is potential that drainage projects could be considered if appropriate. Michael Edwards (Westfield) sought clarification on what sign cleaning was routinely offered. Ruby confirmed that priority was given to safety signs. Ruby to check how often low priority signs are cleaned. The Clerk was asked to recirculate Ruby's contact details.

9 Rother matters

malcolm.johnston@rother.gov.uk

Malcolm Johnston reported that:

- RDC Scrutiny Meeting of 18 March included a report about Sussex Partnership Initiative. There had been an increase in crime, some emergency issues, including a dramatic increase in cocaine use in villages.
- RDC is now in 'purdah' with local elections on 2nd May, including 6 parishes, and all District wards.
- EU elections will be posted on Monday 15th April.
- He thanked those who delivered nominations in person.

10 Battle Wildflower Group – Shared Experience

keithbeechfarm@btconnect.com

Keith Datchler spoke about the work of Battle Wildlife Group in trying to address loss in biodiversity in grass areas outside agriculture within Battle. (Amanda Kerr was available to answer questions). Actions to address the loss of biodiversity include changing grass cutting management (reducing cutting) and increasing diversity. He highlighted work at the Market Road roundabout (the flagship location) and Caldbec Hill. He stressed the importance of starting on a small area, assessing sites for suitability and availability of volunteers and equipment. It is also important to use Weald native origin seed (available from Weald Nature Seed initiative, supplied by Agrifactors in Heathfield) and to micro manage the site. Advice is available on the Plantlife International website and from Kew Nature Group, as well as Battle Wildflower Group.

Cllr Harding (Northiam) asked if it is necessary to start from scratch with wildflower verges. Keith stated that this is not necessary; you can enhance the grass although you can buy wildflower turf in a small area. Karen Ripley (Clerk, Salehurst & Robertsbridge) highlighted a 20 year old meadow owned by her parish. It was confirmed that, to maximise biodiversity, grass cuttings on such a meadow should be removed. Specific contractors are not required for verges – contractors and volunteers can be used. Cllr Jonathan Vine Hall (Sedlescombe) observed that the clearance of ditches between Sedlescombe and Westfield had been a missed opportunity to enhance verges Ruby Brittle confirmed that East Sussex Highways fully support parish wildflower initiatives. However on Highways verges it is necessary to check with her first (Highways look at safety issues etc).

Kim Richards highlighted that Action for Rural Volunteers provide grants to provide seed corns where projects involve volunteers (grants are available until September 2019).

11 Rural Projects

- **Rural Rother Community Network**

Jackie Saull-Hunt/Jen Wells

jackie.sauill-hunt@rva.uk.com

jen.wells@eastsussex.gov.uk

Not present to report – contact details above.

- **RITA Project (Domestic Abuse Awareness)**

Kim Richards

Kim Richards (Rural Community Services Team Leader, Action in Rural Sussex outlined the one year funded project of behalf of her colleague Madelaine Taylor. The main part of the project is to raise awareness of Domestic Abuse and support available. Members were encouraged to contact Madelaine for more information. There is significant under reporting of domestic abuse in rural areas. 12 events will be held across the County a part of the 'pizza and lego' one year funded project with parishes and village who would like to support conversations. Interested parishes were asked to contact Madelaine (madelaine@theritaproject.com) or Kim Richards at Action in Rural Sussex (kim.richards@ruralsussex.org.uk). A flyer and cards were tabled with more information. Outreach workers are available for long term support.

- **Safe from Harm Project**

Deena Best

(Support for persistently Targeted Vulnerable & Insecure Victims of Crime)

Deena Best outlined the pilot Safe from Harm project funded by RDC and other councils

Parishes were asked to contact the team if they find people subject to this risk

safefromharm@sussexcommunity.org.uk

12 Reports from RALC representatives

No reports had been circulated. Alan Stainsby (Crowhurst) had attended a recent Standards Committee; and noted there was nothing to report. There are still problems but they are not being reported. The Standards Committee is under ongoing review. The Chair reported that RDC had announced that they were no longer able to host parish websites. Malcolm Johnston to investigate.

13 Any Other Business – none.

14 Date of next meeting – Thursday 11 July 5.30pm (*reverted to Wednesday 10 July 2.30pm after the meeting*).

The meeting ended at 4.15pm.

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