

**Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2020 at 7.30pm  
(Virtual Meeting held on Zoom)**

**Present:** David Pankhurst (Peasmarsch) (**RALC Chairman**), Peter Turner (Icklesham) (**RALC Vice Chairman**), John Barnes (Etchingham), John Bradford (Camber), Gillian Branford (Salehurst & Robertsbridge) Stephen Burley (Ticehurst), Gill Colquhoun (RALC Secretary), Ros Day (Crowhurst), Tracy Dixon (Brede), Michael Edwards (Westfield), Richard Farhall (Rye), Bob Franklin (Burwash), Jill Gyngell (Battle), Jacqui Harding (Northiam), Carol Hollamby (Mountfield), Issy Horsley (Fairlight), Malcolm Johnston (Rother District Council) , Gilly Lowe (Brightling), Emma Neil (Burwash), Les Nottage (Brede), Hilary Pankhurst (Peasmarsch), David Penfold (Pett), Judy Petty (Brightling), Cllr Sue Prochak (Rother District Council), Keith Robertson (Catsfield), Jackie Scarff (Sedlescombe), Jean Scott (Whatlington), Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe and RDC Councillor), David Young (Ewhurst)

**1 Welcome.**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to RALC's first virtual meeting, noting that the Covid 19 Pandemic had provided an opportunity to hold an evening meeting, which some members had requested. He informed those present that the meeting was being recorded on Zoom to aid minute taking. Everyone was in agreement with the recording. Voting would be carried out by online 'polling' on Zoom.

**2 Apologies for absence**

Jane Clarke (Westfield), Janet Ellis (Hurst Green), Pauline Glew (Sedlescombe), Inspector Jonathan Hartley (Sussex Police), Karen Ripley (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), David Smedley (Icklesham)

**3 Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020, were agreed with one amendment:** Item 7 Highways Para 3 – John 'Bradford' to be replaced by John 'Barnes'.

**4 Matters arising from previous meeting (items on agenda only)**

No discussion.

**5 Official business in lieu of AGM**

- **To approve deferment of AGM/RALC executive to remain in post until July 2021**  
Members **voted unanimously to approve** deferment.
- **To agree updated constitution \***  
Members **voted unanimously to approve** the updated constitution proposed by RALC executive, dated February 2020.
- **To approve audited accounts for 2019/20 \***  
Members **voted to approve** the accounts.
- **To approve budget for 2020/21 \***  
Members **voted to approve** the budget. (2 abstentions)

**6 Speeding Proposal – to discuss RALC proposal for parishes produced as result of discussion with members and Sussex Police \***

Keith Robertson (RALC Executive member leading on this initiative) provided an update. Three documents had been circulated with the papers for the meeting: 'Rother Association of Local Councils: Reducing Speeding in Towns and Villages in the Rother area', a report

drafted by Keith Robertson and David Pankhurst, with 2 appendices: 1.Black Cat Radar product details (the equipment RALC was recommending members to purchase), and 2.HAUC UK certificate for individuals surveying and installing the Black Cat Radar device. Keith Robertson summarised the report: it was suggested that those Parishes with a speeding problem who wish to report speeding data to the Police consider purchase a Black Cat device for use around their Parish, either individually or sharing the purchase with other Parishes. Sussex Police had confirmed that the data collected on this equipment, which is the same as that which can be rented from County, would be recognised by the Police and Highways. If Parishes are likely to record more than 5 times a year it would be cheaper than rental. Catsfield had already decided to purchase the equipment to arrive in July, and could act as a pilot site. Other interested Parishes could watch its use and then consider purchase themselves. Sussex Police have confirmed that where the data shows speeding hotspots (the fastest cars driving at high 40s and 50s mph) they will use it, sending officers to those locations for enforcement. Inspector Hartley had recently confirmed that the Police will also accept SpeedWatch data as evidence of hotspots (to date SpeedWatch data has not had any effect on enforcement) and stated that they do intend to react. [Since the meeting Police have visited Catsfield and Sedlescombe Parishes to undertake enforcement]. Inspector Hartley proposed a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) in the Police to receive data from RALC Parishes, and suggest RALC have a SPOC to feed data through to the Police. Keith Robertson confirmed that he was happy to be that person, and that Catsfield would be happy to share the data they collect with Members, which he would consolidate and produce in a format usable by the Police, noting that PCSOs cannot issue speeding tickets.

Questions/points were made by Members as follows:

A member asked what is meant by Highway Authority? – this was confirmed to be East Sussex Highways.

Cllr Bob Franklin (Burwash) stated that Burwash is moving towards 20mph limit through the village, and he is happy to share what is needed to do this.

Cllr Peter Turner (Icklesham) stated that Winchelsea had deferred a decision on a traffic scheme until the Autumn.

Cllr Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe) stated that Sedlescombe is also pursuing 20mph limit through the village. Sedlescombe is potentially interested in sharing equipment purchase with other Parishes.

Cllr David Pankhurst (Peasmarsch) stated that Peasmarsch is interested in slowing the traffic down as it goes through the village towards Camber.

Cllr John Bradford was happy to discuss sharing a device with Councillors at Camber.

A question was asked on whether the device is easily portable. It is (size of old yellow pages) and can be strapped to a post, and battery powered.

A question was raised on the cost. Each device costs £2500 which includes fittings. Cllr Sue Prochak suggested an application for funding could be made through community grants.

A point was made that Risk Assessment and rules and regulations for sharing would be needed to use the Radar equipment. Richard Farhall explained that he had undertaken the associated training as a supervisor and operative, so may be able to assist other Parishes with installation and reinstallation of the speed recording device. Health and Safety certification is necessary if the equipment is installed less than 1.2 metres from the kerb. Rye had recently discussed motorcycle speeding and intends to propose to Inspector Hartley that those speeding receive a letter from motorcycle action group rather than the Police when it is their first offence.

A member asked whether SpeedWatch would consider heavier enforcement for faster speeds. This is not currently being considered.

A member tabled the idea of group training. This could be a possibility.

It was **agreed** that each Parish should discuss at Parish level whether they would consider purchasing the equipment on their own or sharing with other neighbouring councils, liaising with other councils where appropriate. Parishes to inform the Secretary of their intentions by the end of September,

## **7 Covid 19: Sharing of Parish experiences – to discuss**

Malcolm Johnston and Sue Prochak were invited to speak. Malcolm stated that he was very proud of the response of RDC Officers, and Parish Councils. It had shown the importance of local government. Neighbours, friends and Parish Councils have done a lot of work. He acknowledged that RDC response had been a bit slow to start but soon dealt with, and it was one of the first councils to issue grants. The situation had also moved Rother into agile working. There was a huge problem with litter particularly at Camber, and fly tipping. The financial burden of the pandemic had not yet been resolved. (Government formula to reimburse is 75-90% of what had been expected). The council is keen to learn lessons, and is keeping an eye on a possible second spike.

John Barnes (Etchingham) thanked RDC, highlighting the financial programme. Etchingham proposed to keep its voluntary group running and had reluctantly reopened its playground. He felt problems are more likely to come back in a year, as financial reserves are run down this year.

Issy Horsley (Fairlight) thanked RDC but highlighted that Rother had got away with few cases which means a limited number of residents are immune. She asked when the virus returns will Rother have a hotline for local testing numbers. Sue Prochak stated that Environmental Health were very responsive to a Covid case at Robertsbridge Community College, but recognised that is a top down exercise which makes councils anxious as they are not getting detailed information about location of cases. [Cllr Prochak checked with Environmental Health after the meeting who confirmed that they would inform Parishes once they are confident that reports of future outbreaks were genuine. The Head of Environmental Health had told her that reporting is getting better]. John Barnes reassured the meeting, in his capacity as a member of ESCC, that ESCC is receiving pillar 2 information which will be shared with Environmental Health departments. [John Barnes provided details of the East Sussex Outbreak Plan after the meeting. This can be found at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/emergencyplanningandcommunitysafety/coronavirus/outbreak-control-plan/>]. Malcolm Johnston stated the information is there but it needs to get to the right people at the right time, to enable us to make decisions. He felt it was a credit to people of Rother that there had been low local infection but Camber had been a nightmare, particularly litter. RDC cannot always get it right but is willing to learn. He invited Parishes to say if RDC get anything wrong. Sue Prochak confirmed that RDC do not have the powers to close the beaches.

Jonathan Vine-Hall suggested that Parishes promote Rother alerts, as a lot of original subscribers have been lost through GDPR resubscription.

Cllr Michael Edwards (Westfield) asked if Parishes could be reimbursed by RDC for money spent on food donations, fuel for volunteers, extra Clerking hours etc. Malcolm Johnston was not able to confirm if this is a possibility, currently RDC is in deficit. Fairlight, Etchingham and Rye had received grants from Hastings Direct.

John Barnes (Etchingam) agreed with Malcolm Johnston that information needs to get to the right people, ensuring that daily ESCC bulletins go to Parish Clerks. County are also working with Public Health to establish why deprived areas in Hastings and Rye have not suffered.

The effect of the pandemic on business was discussed:

Malcolm Johnston felt the biggest challenge is getting confidence back in people to go out and use local business; we all have a role in instilling confidence. At the same time measures need to be taken to ensure people feel safe. Anecdotal evidence suggests that local business is suffering. Cllr Prochak informed the meeting that at a recent recovery programme RDC members had discussed introducing a kitemark for businesses who have followed social distancing guidelines etc.

Richard Farhall was invited to explain the set up of Rye Mutual Aid (RMA). He reported that Rye Town Council was very grateful to the work of 2 parishioners in establishing RMA. Rye Town Council had given the start up funding, and RMA want to continue in some form of mutual support role. RMA have dialogue with other organisations. including Rother Voluntary Action. Peter Turner, Izzy Horsley and David Penfold had found RMA very helpful in their parishes.

David Penfold (Pett) queried when the district valuer would be able to recommence visiting properties. Malcolm Johnston will check and inform the Secretary.

Sue Prochak informed the meeting that RDC is planning to hold the Rother Rural Conference on Zoom on 28 October. Concern was voiced that this was during Half Term. Sue Prochak was asked to check if it could take place instead on 21 October, and to notify the Secretary so that she could advise RALC members.

## **8 Rother Housing quotas – to outline issue**

Jonathan Vine-Hall explained the situation, in his capacity as Chairman of Rother Planning Committee. He begun by stating that members lived in a beautiful area, the only remaining example of a medieval landscape in Europe. However this is not recognised in the national planning framework which impacts on house numbers ,which the government wishes to be built in Rother. RDC has a core strategy local plan which determines how many houses to be built in Rother of which 82% is in AONB, but this is not always taken into consideration. Five years ago Rother was targeted with 355 houses pa, a significant proportion in the north of Bexhill. When the plan is 5 years old it has to be reviewed and house building numbers recalculated. There is 3-4 years of land supply in Rother but that will reduce. The new proposed figure increases quotas to 727 houses pa, a 105% increase. Yet Rother has not been able to deliver more than 200 houses pa in the last few years, partly due to developers not yet building which means there is a lot of interest from speculative developers. The district is also running out of space.

A small group of Rother parishes which have / are compiling Neighbourhood Plans (Ticehurst, Robertsbridge, Etchingam, Sedlescombe) have been trying to lobby the government, meeting with the Housing Minister and gaining support from Huw Merriman MP. Jonathan asked for agreement of RALC Members for RALC to write to Secretary of State, to put the case to Government to abate the amount of housing in High Weald AONB. He also encouraged Parishes to write a Neighbourhood Plan (NP), highlighting that Julia Edwards had recently been appointed as new NP officer at RDC to support Parishes. Thirdly RDC will be sending a questionnaire to parishes asking Parishes what they like / has and hasn't worked in Rother Plan. This gives Parishes the opportunity to contribute at start of process.

Members asked questions:

Peter Turner (Icklesham) asked when Rother last undertook a Housing Needs Survey which would help provide data. Cllr Vine-Hall confirmed that this was when the last core strategy was written, since which the Government has produced a standardised formula.

A member asked what level of abatement is being asked. Abatement would be related to % of development in area; in reality 200 pa currently being achieved relates to the level in last Housing Survey.

Stephen Burley (Ticehurst) was appalled at the proposed new target, and felt it was impossible to achieve. He wanted to bring pressure to bear to the top.

John Barnes (Etchingam) supported RALC writing, he felt the housing target was damaging. All parishes in AONB have a strong incentive to argue for a target relevant to housing needs. Local cause should prevail over national need. (housing is not needed in Rother). Several members supported this view.

Members voted whether RALC should write to the Secretary of State. **Unanimous approval** to do so. It was **agreed** that David Pankhurst and Jonathan Vin Hall would write a draft to the Secretary of State and circulate to members, prior to sending. Stephen Burley (Ticehurst) informed the meeting that John Barnes and other members are putting together a paper which may form a useful basis for the letter.

## **8 Any Other business**

Issy Horsley (Fairlight) felt that better communication was required up and down local government. In particular Parishes are not always made aware of works planned in Parishes. It is essential that Parishes are told when works are planned (it was recognised that statutory bodies are allowed to act in emergency). It was **agreed** that RALC write a letter to ESCC stressing the importance of better and more meaningful communication. asking them to inform Parishes via an email to each Parish Clerk (and neighbouring Clerks) as appropriate. Parishes were asked to give examples to the Secretary to back up the letter. John Barnes was concerned that not all Parishes were receiving the regular county bulletin.

Bob Franklin (Burwash) requested how the Secretary was progressing with obtaining district and county data to share on Geosphere. The Secretary stated that work was stalled by the pandemic but will work on this with Geosphere. Malcolm Johnston offered support if there were any issues. The Secretary was asked to include on the agenda for the next meeting.

## **9 Date of next meeting – date and time to be confirmed**

Next RALC meeting 7<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30 pm via Zoom  
(Rother Parish Conference 21<sup>st</sup> October via Zoom – this date to be confirmed).

*The meeting ended at 9.28pm*

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