

Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC)
Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2017, 2.30pm
on the Ground Floor,
The Emmanuel Centre, Harrier Lane, Battle TN33 0FL

Present: Richard Adams (Rother), Dave Bailey (ES Highways), Lesley Bannister (Brede), John Collins (Rother), Ann Cook (Ticehurst), Joan Downing (Westfield), Michael Edwards (Westfield), Carol Harris (RALC Secretary), Tony Ganly (Rother), Pauline Glew (Sedlescombe), Margaret Howell (Battle), **Richard Jessop** (Battle) (**RALC Chairman**), Malcolm Johnston (Rother), Wendy Miers (Dallington), Samantha Neame (ES Highways), David Pankhurst (Peasmarsh), Hilary Pankhurst (Peasmarsh), John Poole (Ticehurst), Karen Ripley (Saleshurst & Robertsbridge), Dan Russell (Sussex Police), Jean Scott (Whatlington), Alan Stainsby (Crowhurst), Bob Turgoose (Udimore), Peter Turner (Icklesham), Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe), Nigel Wooldridge (Camber).

1 Self-introductions

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and invited self introductions.

2 Apologies

John Bradford (Camber), Nick Brown (Saleshurst & Robertsbridge), Richard Farhall (Ewhurst), Jacqui Harding (Northiam), Carole Kynvin (Brede), Peter Miles (Mountfield), Les Nottage (Brede), David Perrett (Guestling), David Stone (Playden).

3 Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2017

The minutes were approved.

4 Matters arising from meeting held on 11 January 2017

Nigel Wooldridge reported that there had been no response to a broadband article in Camber's newsletter.

5 Finance

The update as at 31 March 2017 was noted. The Secretary reported that a few Councils had not yet paid their subscriptions and a reminder had been issued. The Chairman highlighted the reserves that are available for training that any small Councils require.

6 Sussex Police

Insp Dan Russell(DR) reported that he is attempting to attend as many Parish Assemblies as possible. He stated that it was no longer feasible to attend regular Council meetings but that he would endeavour to ensure attendance for any important issues. DR acknowledged that the recent tragic incident had emphasised traffic issues although it had also highlighted the community support that exists. He confirmed that a Police priority remains keeping people safe together and feeling safe. He said that changes within the service are ongoing. Thanks were expressed to DR for communication during the tragic events and the increased police presence in Camber in response to the sudden great number of visitors recently. Wendy Miers requested a joint investigation into the high number of vehicle incidents on a particular section of the B2096. DR agreed to this request and advised members that an Officer could usually be available to accompany Speedwatch activities to support and issue relevant penalty warnings.

Richard Jessop(RJ) highlighted the new Speed Indicator Device(SID) that ESCC had purchased and is available for loan to suitably trained volunteers. Jonathan Vine-Hall(JVH) reported that Sedlescombe PC have a SID that could also be shared with other Parishes.

The Chairman thanked Insp Russell for his report.

7 ES Highway/ Costain CH2M

The Chairman welcomed Samantha Neame(SN) and Dave Bailey(DB) to the meeting. DB reported that it is almost the end of the 1st year of a 7 year contract which has seen the transference of 200 employees from ESCC to the new Costain CH2M organisation. He highlighted the strong emphasis on vision and values in relation to staff and customer service. DB confirmed that the new system had saved 300 days of disruption and that sustainability is practiced wherever possible.

SN reported the new website which is helping to improve communication on maintenance and other activities in the area: www.eastsussexhighways.com She confirmed that social media is also being used to encourage interaction with younger members of society and there continues to be newsletters circulated to Parishes via email. SN encouraged members to raise any concerns with Danielle Georgson, Customer Services Manager for Rother. She emphasised the challenge faced in light of financial reductions with an aging network and rural roads that had not been designed for today's traffic. SN asked that members consider that work is carried out to a best value approach which may not always be visually obvious. She reported that drainage as a whole picture is the future focus; with landowners also being encouraged to take responsibility. SN reminded members that community match funding is available for some projects.

RJ suggested that some repairs appear to be of a poor quality. SN confirmed that there are standards audits on 10% of repairs and that compliance checks are regularly completed. Members raised various issues and SN agreed to investigate and respond via the Secretary.

The Chairman thanked Samantha Neame and Dave Bailey for attending.

8 East Sussex Highway matters – covered in the above item

9 Rother matters

John Collins reported that there will be a new waste contract during 2019 and confirmed that work on the County Council elections on 4 May are well underway.

10 Electoral Services

John Collins introduced Richard Adams(RA), Electoral Services Manager. RA confirmed his role encompasses the registration for and the elections themselves. He reminded members of the options for voting and the dates for registration. RA reported that there are no scheduled elections for 2018. It was felt that, as a consequence of high profile elections and the referendum, there is now more general interest. RA advised that the electoral marked register is only available to limited individuals with the general electoral register available for viewing at the Town Hall.

In response to a suggestion that figures may not be clear on Council Tax bills, Malcolm Johnstone agreed to consider whether these could be made clearer in future years.

RA confirmed that the boundary review is a 2-3yr process and is ongoing.

Tony Ganly reported that the Rother Rural Trust is a charity formed in 1998 that considers grants, historically between £45-£500, for a range of beneficiaries. He confirmed that Rural Rother excludes Bexhill, Battle and Rye. He welcomed donations and requests.

11 Proposal to offer financial support to Sedlescombe Parish Council if a Judicial Review is sought

The Chairman reminded members that Neighbourhood Plans(NP) have been encouraged by Government but then ignored by Districts. He suggested that with RALC finances available, £800-£1000 could be earmarked to help parishes towards any necessary legal action.

RJ invited Jonathan Vine-Hall(JVH) to report on Sedlescombe Parish Council's(SPC) experience. JVH confirmed that SPC had been the first to embark on a NP despite discouragement from RDC. Highlighted by residents' opinion on proposals at Street Farm, a NP group was formed 4yrs ago with 88% support from residents. JVH confirmed that funds are not requested but general support is important.

After some discussion, RJ withdrew proposal for financial support as unnecessary. He asked that members consider the assistance that Sedlescombe PC have offered other Councils and suggested this be returned in the form of general support.

12 Reports from RALC representatives

Richard Jessop reported on attendance at:

- a Grievance Panel hearing. He highlighted that these are generally between Clerks and Councillors and suggested that training courses are invaluable to ensure correct procedures are followed;
- South East Region County Associations Forum;
- East Sussex Association of Local Councils board;
- Surrey & Sussex Association of Local Councils Conference;
- Quality Awards meeting at which Westerham and East Peckham had been selected for Awards;
- East Sussex Association of Local Councils board meeting.

He will arrange for circulation of all minutes as appropriate.

13. Any Other Business/Future Agenda Items

Joan Downing reported concern that with 32 parishes in Rother there are few represented at RALC. The Chairman agreed that all should be invited to join.

Jonathan Vine-Hall reported that a New Councillors training course is available locally and invited other Parishes to join. Members agreed that joint training should be encouraged.

Ann Cook expressed concern that public toilets are closing as a result of business rates. Malcolm Johnstone confirmed that central government dictate which facilities are rateable and that any discretionary relief is funded by RDC.

- Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan – update

14. Next meeting – Wednesday 12 July 2017

The meeting ended at 4.30pm

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