

# **ROTHER ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (RALC)**

**12 April 2023, 2.30 pm at Staplecross Village Hall**

Present: David Young (Chairman & Ewhurst), Keith Robertson (Catsfield), Jenner Sands (Icklesham) Geoffrey Smith (Fairlight) Gillian Banford (Salehurst & Robertsbridge) Dianne Mower (Brightling) Tina Langmead (Beckley) Julie Ramus (Rye Foreign) Tracey Dixon (Brede) Les Nottage (Brede) John Barnes (Etchingham) Pauline Glew (Sedlescombe) Johnathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe) Trevor Leggo (SALC) Issy Horsely (Fairlight) Peter Lamont (Peasmarsh), Bob Kenward (Sussex Police Community Speed Watch) Lucie Bolton (Rother District Council) Isla Dacey and Dale Poore (East Sussex Highways)

## **1. Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Martin Holgate, Susan Prochak, Jill Gyngell, Malcolm Johnson, Jane Clarke, Ros Day, David Stone, Richard Farhall, Viv Taylor-Gee, Lesley Voice, Janet Ellis, Phil Allard, Olivia Carroll.

## **3. Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023.**

Agreed.

## **4. Community Speed Watch**

**Bob Kenward**

Bob Kenward introduced himself as a civilian volunteer for Sussex Safer Roads and explained his role within Community Speed Watch in East Sussex.

Bob provided everyone with a report on Community Speedwatch and confirmed that he is the port of call for all CSW enquiries or any assistance with CSW.

Bob said that you do not have to be a member of CSW to report incidents of speeding and any member of the public can report this via Operation Crackdown.

## **5. Keynote: Rother District Council Environment Dr Lucie Bolton**

Dr Bolton gave a presentation in relation to Rother Climate Action. The presentation detailed RDC current emissions and set out how RDC intend to deliver net zero, and be carbon neutral by 2050. She confirmed that this would involve a reduction of approximately 13.8% each year to achieve this goal.

It was noted that RDC declared a climate emergency in 2019.

Dr Bolton set out the steps that should be taken by councils once they have declared a climate emergency and confirmed the councils that had already declared a climate emergency as follows:-

Battle, Bexhill, Brightling, Crowhurst, Ewhurst, Hurst Green and Sedlescombe.

Dr Bolton explained that declaring a climate emergency shows residents that we are taking climate change seriously, provided guidance on how to calculate parish emissions using the LGA Carbon Accounting Tool for Operational Emissions, and the Impact

Community Carbon Calculator. The link for this will be circulated to the clerks with the presentation following the meeting.

RDC want to incentivise town and parish councils to declare a climate emergency and will do all they can do support them with this.

David Young expressed that training on this would be a good idea, especially with the new councillors after the elections. Dr Bolton confirmed that she would send the slides from this presentation out to be circulated to all town and parish councils.

Keith Robertson expressed his concern that this can be tricky with not enough people and manpower to do very much. Keith went on to ask whether RDC will support town and parish councils to install cost-neutral car charging ports within their car parks, to which Dr Bolton confirmed they would.

Gillian Banford said that understanding what other councils are doing is helpful as we can all learn from each other and support one another.

It was also pointed out that RDC seem to plan for developments that are a distance from town and parish services and that this would counter-act this initiative as people are then required to drive everywhere.

John Barnes stated that dark skies policies need to be implemented/changed as lighting around stations are in contradiction of such policies.

## **6. Police Matters:**

Inspector Olivia Carrol

It was noted that Olivia Carrol gave apologies for the meeting but had provided a written report in her absence which will be circulated to all Clerks.

While on this subject Trevor Leggo confirmed that the Police and PCC Focus Group meetings were upcoming on 23rd May for Rother, splitting the district into two sessions - 10:30am for Rye area and 2:30pm for Battle area. The local Chief Inspector together with Trevor himself and Katy Bourne's Communications Manager will be in attendance and this is an opportunity for parishes to be present. The focus of this meeting is to establish whether policing has improved or deteriorated in the last 6 months?

Shoplifting is so prevalent a pilot has been set up in Mid-Sussex (Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead) whereby the town and parish councils meets with traders and a police inspector to find ways of reducing shoplifting using an app on a mobile phone. The next roll out for this pilot will be Rother. The cost is currently being met for 3 years 50/50 by the district Council and Katy Bourne from the Proceeds of Crime Fund.

## **7. Confirm new secretary and update contacts list.**

The new secretary Alex Sharp was introduced and had been in this position since March 2023 and Clerks were reminded that Alex is contracted to only 2 hours a week and so bear with Alex as there isn't a lot of time to respond to queries.

## **8. Accounts for the end of the financial year 31 March 2023 and changes to bank mandate.**

The Accounts for the end of the financial year 31 March 2023 were confirmed and approved.

Keith confirmed that there is a small surplus on the accounts.

There are also a few councils that haven't paid their membership fees and Keith asked that they contact the clerk about this.

The changes to the bank mandate were noted and confirmed.

## **9. Enforcement : General/Caravan Parks**

It was noted that there is concern that around 80% of Caravan Parks in RDC have people living in them on a more permanent basis, using services i.e. schools, ambulances, GP Surgeries etc and this is clearly a result of the housing emergency. The general consensus is that this is something that needs to be addresses as the offending people are not paying what they should be.

David Young said he is prepared to get this ball rolling with Trevor Leggo. Trevor said that there is an ESALC board meeting on Monday and this report will be brought up then.

John Barnes expressed his concerns in relation to the definition of a caravan as mobile homes appear to be on these sites too!

Pat Hughes questioned whether those residing in the caravan sites for 50 weeks per year on the electoral roll? To which it was confirmed that they can be.

Issy Horsley stated that it isn't just the financial side of this that is the problem - caravan parks puts additional stress on utilities. There is a sewage problem in Fairlight and caravan parks are a contributory factor. Caravan parks have more sewage than a business complex!

It was also noted that there have been a spate of applications for extending the duration that people may reside in a caravan park from 32 to 50 weeks, which have been approved by RDC, this is exacerbating the problem.

## **10.Rother Matters**

Malcolm Johnson

Sue Prochak

It was noted that Malcolm and Sue had given their apologies for the meeting but that Malcolm had prepared a report that had been circulated to all Clerks prior to the meeting.

**State of the roads, what is the plan and strategy to fix.**

Isla Dacey gave a report on the state of the roads and the current repairs which included the following points:-

- Highways are taking the programme of reactive repairs.
- 2500 potholes have been repaired since January 2023 (1100 of these were repaired in January alone).
- The more extreme and wet winter weather have increased the number of potholes to previous years.
- There have been 7287 inspections undertaken by Highways Stewards.
- Some pothole repairs have failed. Each pothole repair has a 24 month guarantee and if it fails they ESCC do not have to fund the fixing of the pothole more than once in 24 months.
- Each report received, if considered in need of repair has one of three timescales allocated i.e. 2hrs, 5 days or 28 days – depending on the danger assessed.
- The team are only able to repair potholes/road issues that are considered safety issues and not for other reasons. However teams can identify other areas that are in need to repair that haven't necessarily been reported yet if they feel it is a safety concern.
- The repair, standard and quality of each repair is assessed.
- ESH have been given additional funding for signage replacement and road markings so this will be underway throughout East Sussex.
- SLR meetings are still taking place.

Dale Poore, Contract Manager (East Sussex) gave a report as follows:-

- East Sussex Highways are very aware of the conditions of the roads and this is a result of a very challenging winter, a combination of climate change – wetter winters and hotter summers.
- There is a record number of potholes for repair and those that have failed previous repair.
- Alongside these issues road resurfacing is also being done.
- Stewards also undertake ad-hoc inspections, not just attending reported issues.

Keith Robertson asked what the ESCC highways strategy is to find a long term solution to the ongoing road conditions. Keith asked how much money is required to get this done? Dale confirmed they have almost £300,000,000 worth of backlog on the worst roads. Dale explained that the strategy isn't to get the roads in better condition, as they do not have the funding nor the time to do this, instead it is more a task of chasing their tail. Keith Robertson stated that this was not acceptable because continually fixing potholes as a temporary solution

is not working and roads are year by year deteriorating. Cllr Robertson proposed that RALC write to ESCC members as they set policy and resource allocations.

They have however received a £2.3 million increase in funding for the repair of potholes from the Government.

County-wide drainage issues were also raised.

Geoffrey Smith expressed frustration from the lack of communication to reports and to emails and then once a response is received it is usually that the pothole/issue isn't dangerous enough to require attention. Furthermore Geoffrey is concerned at the lack of urgency to really urgent matters. Isla confirmed that urgent matters do need to be reported by telephone, as emails/online reports do take a few days to allocate.

There is a new contract starting soon with Balfour Beatty and so hoping for better communications and quality of repairs going forward.

## **12. Quiet Lanes Where do we go to make this happen?**

### **20 is Plenty to replace 30mph**

It was noted that this is taking a long time to progress. There would be huge benefits to pedestrians if 20 is Plenty is in place.

Julie Ramus stated that single track roads need to be limited to 20mph and it was agreed that East Sussex County Council need to push this forward. RALC will write to ESCC to request statement of intent to resolve this.

Near fatal accidents occurring regularly, these are exceptionally dangerous times at the moment with potholes and road conditions, our speed limits need to be amended to reflect this.

Trevor mentioned that on the 20 is Plenty website it encourages towns/parishes to gather support, ideally from an overwhelming number of the community support the initiative then it makes it more persuasive for the County Council to listen.

### 13. Response to Rother Local Plan Site Allocation.

Parish Councils should now have had their meetings with RDC in relation to the Local Plan Site allocations as a mass of houses seems excessive and more damaging to a village than more sporadic placing.

Keith Robertson expressed that he believes that the logic in the allocation is wrong for some Parishes with green land being used again and again for developments in villages, supported by the Rother Local Plan. He will be responding RDC detailing these concerns. If any other town/parish council have these concerns to contact him via the Secretary.

**Date of Next Meeting:**  
**12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 Staplecross Village Hall, 2.00pm for start at 2.30pm**  
**End of Meeting**

*Mrs A Sharp, RALC Secretary  
The Bungalow, Hurst House, Hurst Lane, Sedlescombe TN33 0PE*