

ROTHER ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (RALC)

12 July 2023, 2.30 pm at Staplecross Village Hall

Present: David Young (Chairman & Ewhurst), Keith Robertson (Catsfield), David Todd (Salehurst and Robertsbridge) Karen Ripley (Salehurst and Robertsbridge) Andrew Crotty (Bexhill Town Council) Paul Wilson (Bexhill Town Council) Jacqui Harding (Northiam) Les Nottage (Brede) Graham Furness (Guestling) Susan Price (Hurst Green) Tracy Dixon (Brede) Carol Sharpe (Fairlight) Lynda Roller (Crowhurst) John Barnes (Etchingham) Joanna Coleman (Brightling) Peter Lamont (Peasmarsch) Julie Ramus (Rye Foreign) Bernard Brown (Battle Town Council) Robert Frankin (Burwash) David Penfold (Pett)

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Martin Holgate, Susan Prochak, Lisa Cooper, Lorna Ford, Trevor Leggo, Kara Tompkinson, Philip Allard, Richard Farhall, Jonathan Vinehall, Pauline Glew and Members of Beckley Parish Council and Martin Griffiths Beckley

3. Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2023.

Agreed.

4. Rother District Council Matters

Apologies were received from Sue Prochak and a report was received and was circulated in her absence.

5. Rother Planning and Councillor Training

David Young has had a number of parishes keen to do this. It is apparent that such training would be very beneficial to both RDC and Parishes as planning applications cannot be refused based on just opinion and instead must be supported with valid planning policy. Without lawful reason applications cannot be refused.

Cllr John Barnes confirmed that his understanding is that there is a presumption in favour of development in all areas but an AONB. In any event all applications should reviewed quasi judicially and the advantages should be weighed against disadvantages.

Cllr Barnes continued to explain that the Local Plan (currently out of date) includes a number of sites which have been designated for development and this, in effect gives them permission to develop on these sites, although of course there is still the requirement to go through the usual process.

Cllr David Young expressed that a lot of applications don't make it to the planning committee and instead are delegated to the planning department. RDC therefore need Parish Council's informed views and will planning training we can all help this work.

Cllr Young confirmed he will keep on this one to ensure the necessary planning training is set up with RDC.

6. ESCC Action Road and Repair Strategy

Keith Robertson

ESCC have received an extra £50 million for the repair of potholes and repair of the roads. However it is a concern as to how this will be rolled out.

It was noted that Cllr Keith Robertson wrote to Claire Dowling to express the concerns of RALC parishes, to which the response was along the lines of the fact they don't need to keep the roads in good condition, just safe. However this response highlighted what do they interpret as safe? This is a health and safety issue if nothing else – potholes are a huge danger to motorcyclists and cyclists.

Blaming the wet weather for the issues isn't acceptable as we will therefore have the same issue each year with global warming issues. More investment is required to keep the roads 'safe'. The potholes etc are causing damage to cars rendering them unsafe and so more thought is required into this. Especially in the light of the fact that RDC can revise the qualification of what potholes are considered safe. The quality of pothole repairs need to be higher to prevent East Sussex Highways chasing their tails.

Andrew Crotty also highlighted the presence of roads suffering from sink holes and subsidence too.

Cllr John Barnes highlighted the fact that no money was spent on roads in the 1990s and so Highways are now playing catch up. This requires a massive programme of works which ESCC cannot sustain.

RALC to keep the pressure on East Sussex Highways. Cllr Robertson will draft an email response to Claire Dowling highlighting these points.

In relation to the matter of Quiet Lanes that has been previously discussed and it was agreed by all to write to East Sussex Highways in relation to asking them to adopt a quiet lanes policy and how we can support them doing this so that Towns and Villages can pay and apply to have the quiet lanes signage erected. Robert to liaise with Cllr David Young to put together a proposal for East Sussex Highways

7. Rother District Council Energy Project for Village Halls

David Young

There was a recent meeting in relation to this. The installation of solar panels on Village Halls is very much encouraged and taking steps to save energy and money.

Cllr David Young went on to say that he would appreciate it if all parishes could go back to their Village Hall Groups/Committees and encourage them to take steps in this direction.

There are a number of grants and schemes that RDC are able to issue. It was agreed that now is the time to take action and not just talk about things.

8. Police, PSCOs and Engagement with Communities

Apologies were received from Kara Tomkinson of Sussex Police and a report was received and circulated in her absence.

Cllr Keith Robertson stated that Catsfield Parish Council have very good and supportive PSCOs but notes that most PSCOs do not work full time and so I curious as to what other parishes do when their designated PCSO is not working.

It was noted that other parishes have been advised not to contact your designated PCSO direct but instead to contact Sussex Police via 111 and they will route the issue to whomever is on call at the time.

A number of parishes have success in inviting their PCSO's to parish events and community hubs.

Cllr David Young expressed his concern following changes in inspectors and therefore the way in which designated PCSOs work after a successful relationship with the previous PCSO.

Concern was expressed following the protests that have taken place as these exhaust police presence which may be required elsewhere.

The importance for everyone to report crimes that they see via 111 or the website for Sussex Police so that the Police can be aware of this and take any necessary action. Without reports the police are unaware and therefore unable to take action.

9. Parish Councils and Open Spaces

To include by-laws concerning dogs

Community Hubs and meetings were discussed as they have been a huge success in parishes where they have been held and is an excellent opportunity to connect with PSCOs, Citizens Advice and other speakers. It would also be valuable to parishes to share details of their speakers.

It was noted that Cllr Sarah Jacques of Catsfield Parish Council is setting up an outreach project in relation to community hubs which will be coming up in the not too distant future.

The new consultation from RDC was discussed in relation to the blanket Dog Control order. It was resolved that towns/parishes would like to have the ability to make this decision themselves if relevant rather than having a general order affecting all parishes/towns in Rother as some parishes do not feel that they have an issue with the way things are at the

moment and so such an order is felt to be unwanted/unnecessary by some. Those parishes who wish to enforce a Dog Order should be able to request this themselves from RDC.

10.Process for contact with RDC Planning Officers

It was noted that some parishes are experiencing difficulties with the new implemented process of emailing a central email box at RDC Planning Department rather than the case officers to communicate with case handlers i.e., for extension of time for planning comments at RDC Planning Department. Others seem to be receiving better responses. Cllr David Young to follow this up with RDC to highlight this issue and request at least an email confirming receipt.

11.Confirm representative to Rother District Council's Audit and Standards Committee to represent the views of the town and parish councillors across the district, in terms of standards and complaint handling.

It was agreed that Cllr Keith Robertson and Cllr Wendy Miers would continue this role.

Date of Next Meeting:
11th October 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*