

# ROTHER ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (RALC)

## Minutes of Meeting Held on 10 April 2024, 2.30pm Staplecross Village Hall TN32 5QG

Attendees: David Young (Chairman & Ewhurst), Keith Robertson (Deputy Chair & Catsfield), Paul Wilson (Bexhill), David Smedley (Icklesham), Julie Ramus (Rye Foreign), Dale Wheeler (Battle), Karen Ripley (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), David Todd (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), Bob Franklin (Burwash & Udimore), Richard Farhall (Rye & Ewhurst), Graham Peters (Bodiam), Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe), John Barnes (Etchingham), Emma Phillips (Sussex Police), Daryl Holter (Sussex Police) Andrew Vallance (Rother District Council), Lorna Ford (Rother District Council), James Kelly (East Sussex Highways), Stephen O'Connell (Sussex Police)

### AGENDA

Item Number	Agenda Item	Lead
1	<b>Welcome</b> The Chair welcomed attendees.	
2	<b>Apologies for absence</b> Cllr Philip Allard (Iden), Cllr David Penfold (Pett), Trevor Leggo (ESALC), Cllr Bernard Brown (Battle), Cllr Pauline Glew (Sedlescombe)	
3	<b>Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October</b> Approved.	
4	<b>Matters from previous meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energize Sussex presentation- attendees were encouraged to contact the RALC Clerk for further details.</li> <li>Update from parishes- KR invited Parishes to comment on progress on going so that we may share and learn best practice.</li> </ul>	
5	<b>Presentation on Safer Driving and reducing speed through villages</b> Stephen O'Connell presented an update, and the following points were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents are encouraged to contact parishes with their concerns on road safety. Parishes can contact Stephen/SSRP using information provided on slide 11 of the presentation. <b>Action:</b> Stephen to put together diagram of contact information.</li> <li>Reports from parishes are triaged using the SMP (Speed Management Plan). Under the plan, a traffic manager will review whether engineering can be improved, assessing a range of information, including data from Highways and Community Speedwatch groups. If an engineering solution is not appropriate, education and campaigning would be organised. This can include temporary signage (for a period of 3 months) at no additional costs to parishes. Following this, enforcement can take place. This is strategically applied and data-led due to resourcing.</li> <li>The SSRP board meets monthly. It can take c. 8 weeks to respond to reports.</li> </ul>	Stephen O'Connell (SSRP- Safer Sussex Roads Partnership)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the next few weeks, drones will be used for enforcement purposes.</li> <li>• Black cat data is useful but resourcing of this is limited- it is not possible to respond to individuals.</li> <li>• Data on accidents by swerving to avoid potholes is recorded only if it is the cause of the collision. This information is sent to Highways. The group were encouraged to visit the Highways data portal on their website for further information.</li> </ul> <p>Comments from attendees included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winchelsea PC: black cat data has been sent weekly, but no response has been received. <i>This will be followed up via email to SOC.</i> Also noted that in several years of dealing with ESCC the link with SSRP has not been mentioned.</li> <li>• Sedlescombe PC: has a black cat which can be used by other parishes. Recommended Bob Kenward as a contact for Winchelsea.</li> <li>• Etchingam PC: there is an emphasis on safety, but community/social aspect also needs factoring in.</li> </ul>	
6	<p><b>Update from RALC</b></p> <p>KR provided an update, and the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fees for Parish Online have increased and RALC will no longer be the central contact. This means the 30% group discount will stop from Aug 2024, however, when parishes contract after Aug 2024 directly with Parish Online, they can claim VAT back the 20% Vat leaving a minimal change for most parishes.</li> <li>• The 24/25 RALC Budget is on the website. The only fees are RALC membership fees for 2024-25.</li> <li>• RALC/RDC quarterly communications meetings are going well. In recent meetings, items have included risk and communication with the Planning department. Parishes can contact DY or KR with items they would like raised.</li> </ul> <p>Comments from attendees included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bexhill TC: big increase in Parish on Line fees for them. KR advised this is because the POL fee will no longer be equally distributed. Parish on line will allocate fees based on population size, which means that larger councils will pay more and smaller councils less. The fees are negotiable directly with POL.</li> <li>• Sedlescombe PC: RALC could negotiate a group deal. There is a risk of paying disproportionately if charges are based on population.</li> <li>• Burwash PC: planning enforcement is an issue.</li> </ul> <p>Lorna Ford: advised that a Task and Finish group on Enforcement policy is being held.</p> <p>The Chair would like a meeting on the process. Lorna agreed that RDC are open to this and will also work on extending Member briefings to parishes, where appropriate.</p> <p>Brightling PC: asked how site visits are requested. Lorna advised these are held when applications go to the Planning Committee.</p>	Councillor Keith Robertson

7	<p><b>Update on Highways strategy</b></p> <p>James Kelly presented an update, and the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weather has impacted work but since the start of the year, over 1,000 potholes in Rother have been fixed.</li> <li>• Temporary repairs have been made to improve safety. In the longer term, Highways are looking to conduct a formal audit to hold contractors accountable and charge them for repairs, rather than ESCC.</li> <li>• Repairs schemes are updated weekly. Upcoming projects include North Trade Road in Battle.</li> </ul> <p>Comments from attendees included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burwash PC: asked if contractors take a photo after repairs and whether this could be sent to parishes for review. James advised that, due to resourcing, Highways are unable to send photos on every basis but c. 85% of photos are reviewed. Will see if photos can be added to the reporting system.</li> <li>• Catsfield PC: highlighted Now that more pothole funding is coming from Govt- This should be spent on increasing the repairs to roads rather than used to balance reserves. James will investigate this.</li> <li>• Brightling PC: asked for a decision tree and raised how Highways do not attend the Strengthening Local Relationships (SLR) meetings. James advised a decision tree is available on the website and will follow up on the lack of attendance to meetings.</li> <li>• Bexhill PC: underlined the need for better coordination between Highways and ESCC.</li> </ul>	James Kelly (Balfour Beatty) ESCC Highways
8	<p><b>Presentation from AirS Rural Housing Enabling Service</b></p> <p>Tom Warder shared his presentation, and the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural housing enabling is provided to address the shortage of affordable housing in rural areas.</li> <li>• Rural exception sites are areas just outside of village boundaries that can be granted development rights if connections to a village can be demonstrated.</li> <li>• Community-led housing is where the community has a long-term role in development. This arrangement gives communities control, ensures permanent affordability, and can be income generating. Community Land Trusts (CLT) are established by volunteers and enable groups to manage homes and related assets e.g. pubs, shops, nurseries. They are community owned and controlled, not for profit, and can apply to any piece of land.</li> <li>• AirS acts as a service provider and brokerage between all parties; they can identify funding and housing association partners. Parishes are encouraged to contact Tom with questions.</li> </ul> <p>Comments from attendees included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salehurst &amp; Robertsbridge PC: asked if AiRS can look at areas within a land boundary. Tom advised that these incur a much higher price as there needs to be an incentive for landowners.</li> </ul>	Tom Warder (AirS)

9	<p><b>Update from the PCSO</b></p> <p>Emma Louise Phillips outlined the new structure, with individual engagement officers appointed to be the main contacts for each parish. Parishes were encouraged to look online if unsure of their designated engagement officer. The group highlighted the benefits of holding 6-weekly meetings and would like these reinstated. Attendance by senior officers to RALC was also identified as a priority, to support communication.</p> <p>The change in procedures whenever a new inspector takes charge are disruptive. We need a more consistent approach with communication with Parishes before services are changed.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Emma to feedback comments made at the meeting to colleagues.</p>	Emma Louise Phillips
10	<p><b>Update from RDC</b></p> <p>Lorna Ford provided an update on the draft Local Plan. It was noted that on 4 March, members agreed a 12-week consultation period to commence from April. A series of exhibitions are planned across the district and the Planning Policy team will be contacting parishes to update at the annual meetings. Comments can be made online or in writing. RDC hope that the Plan can be published in Spring 25 and adopted in Summer 26.</p> <p>It was also noted that the Planning Policy Manager will be leaving in June 24.</p>	Lorna Ford
11	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>None raised.</p>	
12	<p><b>Dates of next meetings</b></p> <p>Next meeting is 10 July 2.30pm, Staplecross Village Hall.</p>	