

Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC)
Minutes of the meeting held on 15th July at 7.30pm
(Virtual Meeting held on Zoom)

Present: David Pankhurst (Peasmarsch) (**RALC Chairman**), Peter Turner (Icklesham) (**RALC Vice Chairman**), Philip Allard (Iden), John Barnes (Etchingham), Paulette Barton (Etchingham), Gillian Branford (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), Jane Clarke (Ewhurst & Westfield), Gill Colquhoun (RALC Secretary), Lisa Cooper (Rother District Council) Ros Day (Crowhurst), Judith Dean (Pett), Tracy Dixon (Beckley or Brede), Michael Edwards (Westfield), Bob Franklin (Burwash), Jill Gyngell (Battle), Christine Hampton (Hurst Green), Jacqui Harding (Northiam,) Amy Head (Peasmarsch), Martin Holgate (Catsfield), Issy Horsley (Fairlight), Bob Janes (Hurst Green), Trevor Leggo (ESALC), Hamish Munro (Westfield), Pete Munro (Guestling), Frankie Nowne (Ticehurst), Les Nottage (Brede), Hilary Pankhurst (Peasmarsch), John Parsons (Rye Foreign), David Penfold (Pett), Graham Peters (Bodiam), Judy Petty (Brightling), Paul Plim (Mayor Bexhill, Bexhill Town Council), Sue Prochak (Rother District Council), Keith Robertson (Catsfield), Jacqui Saull-Hunt (Rother Voluntary Action), Steve Stewart (Fairlight), Roma Turner (Etchingham), Chris Varrall (Sussex Police), Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe), Kamala Williamson (Ninfield), David Young (Ewhurst),

1 Welcome.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence

Judith Dean (Pett), Malcolm Johnston (Rother District Council), Emma Simpson (ESALC), Isla Dacey (East Sussex Highways), Graham Furness (Guestling), Mark Wey (Brede), Dale Wheeler (Battle), Karen Ripley (Salehurst & Robertsbridge)

3 Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2021, were agreed with no amendments.

4 Matters arising from previous meeting (Items on agenda only) No discussion.

AGM

5 Election of Executive Officers, Committee and Secretary/Treasurer

(a) Chairman David Pankhurst **re-elected**. Peter Turner proposed, Jacqui Harding seconded.

(b) Vice Chairman Peter Turner **re-elected**.

(c) Executive Committee –Chairman, Vice Chairman, Keith Robertson, David Penfold all **re-elected**, David Young **elected** as new final member of Executive. (Up to 3 members in addition to Chairman and Vice Chairman can be elected).

(d) Secretary / Treasurer Gill Colquhoun was **reappointed**. The Chairman informed the meeting that Gill had given notice of her resignation, by the end of October. Members were asked to promote the opportunity to Clerks and other interested parties. Please contact the Secretary for more information. The Chairman thanked Gill on behalf of the Executive for her work over the past 3 years.

6 Appointment/Confirmation of representatives to outside bodies

(a) Rother Audit and Standards Committee Wendy Miers **reappointed**. Keith Robertson **appointed** to fill the vacancy arisen from resignation of David Smedley. Peter Turner proposed, Hilary Pankhurst seconded.

(b) ESALC directors x 3 John Barnes, Peter Turner, Philip Allard all **reappointed**.

7 Finance

To formally approve the end of year audited accounts to 31 March 2021 – the signed auditor's statement had previously been circulated with the papers for the meeting and were **approved** by the meeting. David Young proposed. Peter Turner seconded.

8 Constitution Update – an update to the RALC Constitution had been circulated to reflect the disbandment of SSALC, the opportunity to hold meetings online, and to change the date when membership invoices should be paid. **Approved.** Peter Turner proposed. David Penfold seconded. The Secretary will load a copy of the updated constitution onto the RALC website.

End of AGM

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9 ESALC Update **Trevor Leggo**

Trevor Leggo trevor.leggo@esalc.co.uk provided a verbal update. Rother Parishes have the opportunity to join cluster group meetings with PCC office every 6 months, please contact Trevor if you wish to join one of the next meetings in November. ESALC also meet every 6 months with Jo Shiner, Sussex Police Commissioner; topics of latest discussion included Covid, protests in Brighton, deployment of officers to G7 in Cornwall, and the success of the rural crime team (nearest team based in Heathfield). Jo Shiner is national spokesman for road policing. Parishes should note that applications to borrow money for capital schemes are taking longer than usual (Ministry response currently taking 4 months). ESALC is running a full training programme; if your Council wants specific training speak to Emily Simpson, ESALC administrator. Clerk recruitment has become increasingly difficult with limited supply and high demand creating a pay spiral. Where possible ESALC advice is that clerk retention rather than recruitment is the best policy, do not argue about pay review. The military covenant means local authorities will not disadvantage people by way of their service. There are 36000 veterans across East Sussex with breakfast clubs for veterans spreading to overcome isolation, the nearest is in Hastings. There are grants available to enable Parishes to set up these clubs. From January 2021 community rights mean that if a parish council has some land which it is not using and does not plan to use the public can mount a challenge and take the land over for a defined purpose. ESALC recognises the problem with holding face-to-face meetings from 8 May. With Covid numbers increasing across Sussex a number of Parish Councils are reluctant to meet face-to-face indoors. Options are to work within existing schemes of delegation or meet outdoors. After 19 July the number of members of the public attending meetings will not be restricted to 6. It is thought that there is very low risk of government doing anything if Parishes decide to hold meetings virtually, but there is a risk that the public could challenge through judicial review (this would however be a costly exercise).

Questions

Q John Barnes (Etchingam) asked how does the challenge on property (community rights) square with neighbourhood planning? A There is no connection.

Q Frankie Nowne (Ticehurst) asked if the Parish had a scheme of delegation does that mean they don't need to meet face-to-face. A Recommendation for Councils to meet face-to-face with bare minimum to make the meeting quorate. That quorum is then in a position to make a decision, or Councillors advise the Clerk within a delegation scheme. Covid regulations allow hybrid meetings with phoning in; Trevor is not aware of any Rother parishes who have successfully tried to do this.

Q Sue Prochak (RDC). RDC have returned to live meetings. The overwhelming response to the government consultation on virtual meetings was for Councils to decide for themselves, holding virtual meetings if they wished to do so.

Q Peter Turner (Icklesham) asked whether, if a Council decided to delegate decisions, the Council could meet virtually as a whole to advise the delegated group. A When there is delegation to Clerk the Clerk makes decisions on advice of Councillors. You can meet virtually with the group advising the Clerk on how to exercise delegation. Councillors could meet and advise the Clerk what decision to make, but the Clerk could do otherwise.

Q John Barnes (Etchingam) expressed the opinion that hybrid meetings are tricky – public are allowed to attend by Zoom, whereas Councillors attend face-to-face.

10 Highways matters

Isla Dacey (East Sussex Highways)

Email isladacey1@eshighways.gov.uk

A report had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

Questions

Q Bob Franklin (Burwash) The Parish had experienced difficulty with quality of highways work undertaken. Concerns had been met with platitudes, but then Highways don't do anything. Funding for 20mph in Burwash had been put back by 15 months.

Q John Barnes reminded the meeting that the Highways contract was being renegotiated. County is pressing for quality to be built into new contract. He suggested that if Parishes have concerns, they raise them with the Place Scrutiny Committee who are keeping a watching briefing on the new highways contract. The intention is to make the contract renewable so that there is incentive to do better work (previous contract was not renewable). The officer appointed for contract negotiations, and Karl Taylor Assistant Director were good contacts. He noted that many parish roads are unclassified which means they are not part of the works programme.

Q Pete Munro (Guestling) noted that his Parish had lobbied hard for work to be redone. Although not done everything ESH have done some work.

Q Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe) would support some firmer understand and action; need to know when something will be done.

Q Judy Petty (Brightling) informed the meeting that Brightling had discussed the problem at their June meeting. It is difficult for stewards and customer service managers to make headway higher up the chain within ESH.

The best course of action was discussed, and it was **agreed** that Trevor Leggo would invite the ESCC Cabinet member for Transport to attend the October RALC meeting.

11 Sussex Police

Inspector Chris Varrall (Rother District)

Email Christopher.Varrall@sussex.pnn.police.uk

Inspector Varrall provided a summary of achievements, and of threat, risk and harm going forward. Meetings which assess threat, risk and harm reveal that the force is managing some high and lower end issues across Rother – Rye and surrounding areas organised crime group (9 warrants issued); Battle area cross border criminality (40 subjects identified); drug supply in Bexhill area. From 1st July Rother Police are trialling a new way of working with Parishes, with local PCSOs recording their patrol activity which is picked up by a system and cross referenced against criminal activity. The biggest forthcoming threat is the influx of visitors to the coastal strip which is expected to be 20-30% more than 2019. A public emergency meeting is taking place on 28th July in Camber.

Questions

Q Keith Robertson (Catsfield) requested a meeting with Inspector Varrall to see what results have been for Police when stopping cars in Catsfield A Agreed, PC Jason Kent is Sussex Police point of contact. [PC Jason Kemp will contact Keith to arrange a meeting].

Q David Penfold (Pett) voiced concern re coastal strip. A It is recognised that at times the situation is unmanageable; the Police are looking at short term and long-term resolutions. In respect to Winchelsea Beach there is signage to reduce impact. Rother is on the Beach UK app. [The Camber parish meeting which was held after the meeting covered the issues in Camber and wider coastal areas. The meeting is online on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUxH-f0PQwo>

Q Sue Prochak (RDC) thanked Inspector Varrall for his efforts to solve Camber problems in partnership with RDC. She also congratulated him on his recent public honour. She noted that RDC lose money due to beach clearing, security, lifeguards etc. Although RDC are the lead authority they do not have authority over the road. Inspector Varrall noted that they were working hard to mitigate the risk; the exceptional work by RDC should not be underestimated. [See Camber YouTube for full details on the partnership action].

12 Project Updates

- **Speeding Update** – rollout of Black Cat across Rother

Keith Robertson

Keith shared 4 slides 'RALC Project Speeding Reduction Update July 2021' (See Appendix). Phase 1 Measuring is underway. It looks like the Black Cat box is helping to reduce speed in Catsfield but need to speak to Police to see what their view is. The black cat box continues to be used proving can technically use it and Police received data which they use. So, it is working but do not yet know whether it will make a difference. Hot spots identified as between 7-9am. In response Traffic Police have also been more active in Catsfield but don't know what outcome is. Speed Watch are also targeting 7-9am. Data shows the situation was no better in March 2021 than in October 2020, however the number of cars speeding dropped in May and June.

Phase 2 is Rollout. This has started in Peasmarsh using their recently purchased Black cat device. Sedlescombe have another box which they will share. They are in the process of setting up protocols for sharing a device, and need to pick a small group of Parishes to test sharing.

Phase 3 Media (not yet begun).

Questions

Q Kamala Williamson (Ninfield) stated that Ninfield would be very happy sharing with Sedlescombe.

Q Christine Hampton (Hurst Green) CSW completed surveys just before lockdown; Police and Highways not very interested in issues on A21 and A265. They had been told that because fatal count was so low Highways wouldn't do anything. A Keith Robertson stated that the idea was that black cat data collection can make a case for action. Christine requested that Hurst Green join the test group.

Q Jill Gyngell (Battle) registered Battle Town Council interest in joining the test group

Q Bob Franklin (Burwash) Is Black Cat restricted to 30mph roads? A Keith stated that Isla Dacey had confirmed at the last meeting that not related to speed limit, it is whether it is safe at the site.

Q Trevor Leggo (ESALC) ESALC have established a very good relationship with Sussex Road policing unit. Chief Inspector Raman is responsible for liaising with Safer Roads Partnership. He would be happy to put Hurst Green in touch with Inspector Raman.

Q Jonathan Vine (Sedlescombe) noted that Sedlescombe is aiming to reduce traffic speed in village. They need around 6 Parishes interested in undertaking a test, with training session. He asked that anyone who had not already done so contact him to use the equipment at limited cost of licences and clips. It will take a few months to arrange and the same person from each Parish should be involved in training and use of the Black Cat in their Parish. [After the meeting Cllr Vine-Hall confirmed that Staplecross, Etchingham, Ninfield, Hurst Green, Salehurst & Robertsbridge, Battle and Three Oaks had expressed an interest].

Q John Barnes (Etchingham) stated that Etchingham were happy to cooperate with anyone on Black Cat. Etchingham experience was that static speed screens were not effective; CSW [SpeedWatch} a bit more effective.

Q David Young (Staplecross) stated that Staplecross would like to join the test group.

- **Website Update**

Secretary

The website was now fully operational, and usage would be monitored monthly. Please contact the Secretary if you have any issues or comments. Parishes were asked to promptly sign and return membership forms which will be sent out with RALC membership invoices shortly to ensure membership details can be updated on the RALC website.

13 Bexhill Town Council – update

*Cllr Paul Plim,
Mayor & Chairman Bexhill TC*

Paul Plim was welcomed to the meeting. He updated the meeting on work of the new Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council made up of 18 members, 17 of which are Independent. Work has included establishing what services and income streams the council will be responsible for and building a structure. Bexhill Day has been resurrected for 22 August. The military covenant has been recognised and a climate emergency declared. Julie Miller has been appointed as permanent clerk. Her details are Julie Miller, Town Clerk to Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council town.clerk@bexhillparishcouncil.gov.uk

14 Rother Matters

- **Update on Council matters Cllr Prochak** cllr.susanprochak@rother.gov.uk provided an update on behalf of Rother District Council Cllr Prochak congratulated Paul Plim as Chairman and Mayor of Bexhill Town Council and Mayor. She outlined that Rother Corporate Plan had been completed and the Anti-Poverty Group had started on an action plan. 20 October had been set for Rother Parish Conference, to be focused on Planning (review of Planning department; planning changes [Members to put this date in their diaries]; Alliance Homes; Neighbourhood Plans) If you wish any items to be covered, please contact Sue. Rother has disabled facilities grants available for groups. Work had begun on protected discretionary services. More discretionary business grants are available, please promote this. If Parish know of anyone e.g. start up business still struggling please ask them to get in touch with Sue. Parishes will be aware that a briefing had taken place with Parish Councils on follow up to Rother planning review. She thanked Parishes for responding to the planning review consultation. Training is being considered on submitting comments on planning applications. Some Parishes have been involved in Healthy Ageing through Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE) Project looking at what senior members of the community need in their community. A report is due. As a result, Rother District Council has declared itself an Age Friendly Community.
- **Planning/Housing** Cllr Jonathan Vine-Hall provided an update in his capacity as Chair of Rother Planning Committee. The Review of Planning function had been a successful engagement with parish councils. 60% of problem is customer service; 40% process. The Rother Parish Conference in October will include an update to the Local Plan, also CIL (proposing changes which would give real advantage to local councils). He reminded Parishes that training for members is also available to local Councils. He explained that the backlog in processing planning applications related to staff shortages from the end of 2018; 3 months at the start of Covid when no applications could go out with pink notices; and an increase in both applications and enforcement reports during lockdown. In September 2021 Malcolm Johnston had allocated extra funds to appoint Capita who are working through the backlog applications. There are currently 700 undecided applications which represents 6 months backlog. Systems are also being improved.

Questions

Jacqui Harding (Northiam) expressed the opinion that it is good to hear Parishes may benefit from greater amount of CIL money but there is a need to make it easier for Councils to get access to CIL money. A The proposal would mean it will be easier if housing allocated in your Parish.

Q Martin Holgate (Catsfield) When are Rother likely to bring back enforcement? Serious ones are still being dealt with. Another area of concern is pre application advice which has stopped for now. Optimistic that will be back to statutory period in 6 months.

Q Jill Gyngell (Battle) asked if enforcement action results in serving enforcement notice, is there going to be better enforcement? A Yes.

Q Hamish Munro (Westfield Parish) seconded Trevor's comments that Clerk should be treated with respect. He voiced strong concern about the process whereby permission had recently been granted for development of a 9-acre site Westfield Down. The Parish knew nothing about the fact that Optivo had purchased the site for 100% affordable housing even though S106 agreed a mix of housing. Rother have not taken any legal advice. How can Rother officers approve a change from 60% open market to 100% affordable? The Chairman asked Jonathan Vine-Hall and John Barnes to contact Westfield Parish and resolve the issue to everyone's satisfaction.

15 Dates of next meetings 6 October 2021 7.30pm (Zoom), 12 January 2022 2.30pm (Zoom)
6 April 2022 2.30pm (venue tbc), 6 July 2022 2.30pm (venue tbc). Rother Parish Conference 20th
October 2021 (timing tbc).

Meeting ended at 9.39 pm

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