



Working for the Community in Rotherfield, Mark Cross,  
Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016 AT 20:00 IN ROTHERFIELD VILLAGE HALL

### PARISH COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Cllr. R. Harris (Vice Chair)

Cllr. J. Cahan

Cllr. C. Clibbens

Cllr. K. Curtis

Cllr. T. Gilbert

Cllr. L. Henrick

Cllr. D. Hiles

Cllr. J. Kitchenham

Cllr. A. Martin

Cllr. G. Watson Smith

Cllr. L. Watts

Cllr. N. Wickenden

### ALSO PRESENT

Trevor Thorpe (Parish Clerk), Cllr. Robert Standley ((East Sussex County Councillor, Wadhurst Division), Cllr. Phil Dixon (Wealden District Councillor, Rotherfield Ward), Chief Inspector Rob Leet (Lewes and Wealden District Commander, Pcco Julie Pearce-Martin and 40 Parishioners.

### 1. Apologies for absence.

These were submitted by Cllr. David Thomas (Chair of the Parish Council) and Cllr. Francis Whetstone (East Sussex County Councillor for the Forest Row Division).

### 2. Introduction of Parish Councillors

The Chair introduced the Parish, County and District Councillors present and thanked Adam and Judith Hardy taking charge of the refreshments. Donations will be gratefully received in respect of these for the benefit of Rotherfield St Martin.

### 3. Reports from District Councillors and County Councillors

The key points of Cllr. Standley's report on ESCC matters were as follows:

- Council priorities are economic growth, helping others to help themselves, protecting the vulnerable and making better use of resources.
- Target for 2016-17 is to save £60m out of total budget of £350m. £22m had been saved in 2015-16.
- East Sussex has the highest percentage of people over the age of 85 in any county in England causing pressure on resources to increase as income reduces.
- Difficult decisions need to be made regarding spending.
- Broadband and mobile phone coverage. Whilst this is improving it is acknowledged that it is still patchy in places.

Clerk: Trevor Thorpe, 82 Fermor Way, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 3BJ Tel:01892 664245.

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Regarding Highways matters the following was reported: -

- Potholes. Unfortunately, as quickly as they are filled others appear; In many case in rural areas problems are exacerbated by poor drainage.
- Residents are encouraged to report highways and lighting issues online via the ESCC website or via "Fix My Street".
- It is hoped that the new ESCC Highways contractor will provide an enhanced service; a target for this is to improve communication on issues raised.
- Local successes regarding Highways matters were as follows: -
  - A 40mph speed limit is to be introduced on the A267 near Argos Hill and on the B2101 at High Cross.
  - Long vehicles passing through Rotherfield Village. Progress is being made because of the petition.
- Frustrations are shared that action on matters can take a while to come to fruition.

The key points of Cllr. Dixon's report on WDC matters were as follows:

- It is hoped that the Wealden Local Plan will be completed by the end of 2017.
- It is anticipated that up to 20,000 houses will be built over the next 20 years, primarily in the in south of the District as the north is protected by the AONB and Ashdown Forest.
- Whilst it is Wealden who collect the Council Tax only around 10% passes to them.
- There will a slight increase in next year's Tax, although overheads will be reduced by approximately 25%.
- There are 77 Wealden "to let" properties in the Parish of which 6 became available during the past year. Rural Parishes have priority these tenancies subject to residents qualifying; it is acknowledged that there is a lack of smaller houses to purchase in the Parish.
- Waste collection. Approximately 50% of waste collected is recycled with the remainder being incinerated to generate electricity.
- Wealden is aiming to become a Dementia Friendly District.

Julie Pearce-Martin, our Parish Police Community Support Officer, gave a presentation at this point and the key points were as follows: -

- This was her last meeting in the Parish.
- Residents are fortunate to live in such a lovely area with a low crime rate.
- She is currently unsure where she is to be deployed and is grateful for the support received from Parishioners over the past two years.
- Rotherfield St Martin was a great asset to the community; it had been rewarding working with them to aid the elderly and vulnerable.

Those present thanked and applauded Julie at the close of her presentation.

#### 4. Parish Council Chairman's report

This was presented by the Vice Chair of the Council, Robert Harris, and forms a separate supplement to these minutes.

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## **5. Presentation from Committee Chairmen.**

The presentations made to the meeting form supplements to these minutes: -

- Cllr. Gemma Cahan, Chair, Communications and Social Media.
- Cllr. Norman Wickenden, Chair, Planning and Building.
- Cllr. Trevor Gilbert, Vice Chair, Recreation and Burial.
- Cllr. Adrian Martin, Chair, Highways, Lighting and Transport.
- Cllr. Colin Clibbens, Chair, Finance and General Purpose.

## **6. Questions from the public**

Q. How can the County Council afford to put up signs regarding the closure of the Mark Cross slip road but not be able to put up signage regarding long vehicles in Catts' Hill?

A. Cllr. Standley (ESCC) to take this forward, he noted that signs such as those requested would be subject to approval.

Q. What is the position regarding the provision of a footpath/cycle path alongside Rotherfield Hill B2100 and will land need to be purchased to enable this?

A. Tentative enquiries have been made re: land ownership but progress is unlikely to be swift and will not be until funding is certain – for cycle use a path 3m wide would be required. It has also been noted in the past that creating a path could prejudice the provision of free school transport to Crowborough.

Q. The Memorial Institute Porch has been demolished by a delivery lorry, the owners of which have admitted liability and will cover full cost of replacing. The incident occurred at a time when serious injury to pedestrians could have been caused. Wealden Conservation Officer has been asked if it would be permitted to install bollards in this location for the safety of pedestrians and all users of the building. It had also been requested that the yellow lines opposite the Institute be extended to discourage vehicles from parking there.

A. Any bollards here would need to be licenced by East Sussex Highways. Clerk reported that metal bollards would not be permitted and current Highways view is that the pavement is too narrow for plastic ones. Cllr. Standley commented that there was little prospect of any enforcement of yellow lines due to lack of Police resources. Sussex Police are keen to pursue "de-criminalisation" of parking with enforcement responsibility passed to ESCC. County are not keen on this approach and discussions are taking place with the Sussex PCC Katie Bourne on the matter.

Q. The area is vulnerable to housing development and it is understood that the Millbrook Garden Centre Nursery site is being considered for 15 houses although it is in the AONB. What is the estimated timescale for this development?

A. In response Cllr. Dixon reported that there was little chance of Wealden having a 5-year land supply prior to an application on this site.



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Q. Regarding the issue already raised in respect of the Institute Porch would it be possible to create a “pinch point” there to slow traffic and protect it?

A. A good suggestion which will be added to the next Strengthening Local Relationships meeting with ESCC Highways to discuss.

### 7. Guest Speaker - Rob Leet, Chief Inspector Lewes and Wealden District Police Commander

Inspector Leet emphasised that the challenges faced by the Police were to provide “value for money” to provide resources for front line Officers dealing with “high risk” crimes. Questions were invited from those attending: -

Q. What are the plans for Crowborough Police Station.

A. The Station is still active although alternative sites are being looked at. Policy is not to close Police Stations until alternative sites are found and set up.

Q. Whilst it is acknowledged that serious crimes are rare in Rotherfield speeding issues, obstructive parking and large vehicles passing through are a concern to residents.

A. Similar issues are raised in other Parishes. Sussex Police are members of the Safer Wealden Partnership and Sussex Safer Road Partnership which deal with Crime, anti-social behaviour and highway related concerns. Regarding the latter, reducing the “KSI” (killed or seriously injured) figures is the priority and resources are focused on areas where these occur.

Q. If Officers are passing through the Parish, and if they are not on urgent Police business, could they stop and deal with parking/speeding matters? Persistent bad parking encourages others to do the same.

A. Would only deal with parking issues if they were causing an obstruction and creating a hazard as resources do not allow otherwise. Recommend that use is made of the “Operation Crackdown” website to report such concerns. Sussex Police are keen to “de-criminalise” parking offences and for them to be dealt with by Local Authorities. Cllr. Standley stated that the WDC view was that such a policy would not be popular and could harm trade in Wealden Towns.

Q. What are the priorities for Traffic Officers in Sussex?

A. Dealing with road incidents and targeting areas with high incidence of KSI for speed checks.

The Chair thanked Inspector Leet for his time and dealing with difficult questions and the meeting was closed at 22:00.