

Rother Parish Conference 11th November 2024 Brede Village Hall

The conference for Councillors and Clerks across Rother included the following:

Welcome Lorna Ford, RDC Chief Executive

Thanks to those who took part in consultation on Council Plan, a long term 2040 vision for district with strong alignment with local plan – thriving local economy, live well locally and green to the core. Only 132 responses were broadly in line with what is being proposed. Themes included infrastructure for local developments, projects for rural areas, opportunities for stronger partnerships with voluntary and community sector, protection of green spaces and coastal areas, addressing second homes and rental properties. To go to Council on 16 December for approval.

Budget. Current year on track to make savings needed but found some unexpected overspends from homelessness, planning fees (significantly under, uncertainty with new government most fees from major applications), car park income largely due to weather, interim staffing. New permanent head of planning starting in February. There were some underspends e.g. vacancies. Relying on reserves to balance the budget. Unsustainable capital programme: 1 year settlement 25/26 then 3-year settlement. Still do not know RDC share of social care funding but assumption at start of budget is that £1.4M (10%) savings needed. Worst case shows gap of more than 1m reducing reserves. Still have a buffer, not in as bad a position as other Councils.

The government is looking to move to simpler structures – devolution and local government reorganization. Watch this space.

RALC Chairman Cllr David Young

RALC could play an important role in devolution.

SALC is looking at 20s Plenty, caravans (pay less business rates which go to site owners).

Good relationship with RDC.

Planning & Update on National Policy Gillian MacInnes Interim Head of Planning

Gillian to be replaced by permanent Head of Planning in mid Feb. Currently acquiring a new IT system.

New Government's Direction of Travel

Very strong message to getting Britain building: 1.5 million new homes over the next 5 years, delivering crucial energy water and commercial projects, planning system needs urgent decisive action, every planning authority expected to work on local plans. Revised standard method for housing numbers- now 880 pa at Rother (currently deliver only around 200), brownfield passports (could jump planning stages), scrapping the infrastructure levy (but retain cil and 106).

Planning decision making framework is the basis of decision making, starting with the local plan. Draft local plan will have little weight over its life. Material considerations include previous

decisions/appeals. Non material considerations include house prices, strength or volume of opposition/objection. Advice is make sure people always comment from their perspective. The district councillor's role as a member of the planning committee is to whole of Rother community – basing decision on evidence.

Enforcement Gillian MacInnes

Encouraging residents to report enforcement breaches online so that all on same system. A local planning authority (LPA) must act in a proportionate way. Often the best way to enforce is to get an application in, provided it is not harmful. Cannot punish a person for being retrospective. LPAs have discretion to take enforcement – the only discretionary part of Planning . 100 cases per officer at Rother currently; prioritising the worst breaches, e.g. works to grade 1 listed buildings and there is no action if technical such as just above size allowed, if no 'harm' or if RDC would grant planning permission.

Common misunderstandings include the following: often complaints are not planning issues, is not damage to property, noise is environmental protection. 'We shouldn't take action that we don't think we can win'.

Local Plan update – Holly Harrison Planning Policy Officer

Nearly 3700 individual comments from over 600 respondents. Significantly more than before so the team is still reviewing. (Did not include site allocations but published separate HELA at same time – nearly 1000 sites). The highest comments were received on development strategies, green to core, housing policy, live well locally. Next stage is to produce a final submission version of the plan which will be subject to examination, so the timetable is Spring 2026 final version to meet deadline set by previous government. The NPPF consultation proposes to extend final submission to 2026. Will look at density in terms of need for increased housing numbers.

No Mow May Councillor Cllr Sue Burton, RDC (Battle)

Presented the benefits of No Mow May. Low effort big impact easy win Reminder that there is Rother reduce reuse and recycle grant – share this with Councillors. No Mow May is a national initiative. Battle now in year 3 – automatically now part of management programme, with almost all areas of council-owned land not mown.

Gill Colquhoun 11/11/24