

SALEHURST & ROBERTSBRIDGE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING for the PARISH of SALEHURST & ROBERTSBRIDGE was held at ROBERTSBRIDGE HALL, STATION ROAD, ROBERTSBRIDGE MONDAY 16th APRIL 2018 at 7.15 pm

Presiding: Cllr Nick Greenfield, Chairman of the Parish Council

Present: **Electors:** Approx. 115 **Press:** None

Elected Representatives:

Parish Council: Jemima Bolton; Nick Brown; Nick Greenfield; Ruth Hardy; Stephen Hardy; Sean O'Hara; Roger Palamarczuk; Anne Wells;

Rother District Council: Cllr Sue Prochak; Deborah Kenneally, Neighbourhood Services Manager

East Sussex County Council: Cllr Angharad Davies

Also in attendance: Karen Ripley, Parish Clerk; Peter Pattenden, Village Steward & his wife Susan;

Apologies were received from Cllr Graham Browne, RDC (RDC Meeting); Cllr Gillian Smith; Gardner Crawley, Rother Valley Railway (school event)

The following groups & organisations had tables or displays: Archaeological Society; Community 1st Responders; St Mary's Church; Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group; Women's Institute, Rother Valley Railway; Footpath Volunteer Group; Bell ringers; Hands of Hope; Twinning; Wine Tasting Club; Representatives of Moat Farm / Parsonage Farm (re 'No RVR').

The Vice-Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the local organisations for their displays, and the W.I. for once again kindly organising the refreshments this evening.

- 1. MINUTES OF THE PARISH MEETING 3RD APRIL 2017** - (available on PC website) were approved and signed.
- 2. RECYCLING – PRESENTATION BY ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL** – Neighbourhood Services Manager, Deborah Keneally gave an update on the waste and recycling contract which ends in 14 months-time and is currently going through a procurement process. She advised that she is having weekly operations meetings with the current contractor to resolve some recent issues reported by residents. She went on to clarify some of the things that could, or could not, be put in which bins. Some notable items that cannot be recycled in the mixed green bins were as follows: any black items including black rubbish sacks due to the processing plant not being able to deal with them, polystyrene, bubble wrap, plant pots, rubber/latex gloves. Deborah answered questions from the floor and agreed to check whether greetings cards containing glitter could now be recycled.
- 3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN** – Cllr Stephen Hardy gave an update on the significant progress made with the NP, which will go to referendum on 31st May – report attached.
- 4. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL NICK GREENFIELD** – copy attached.
- 5. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLORS SUE PROCHAK AND GRAHAM BROWNE** – Cllr Prochak gave a report, copy attached. Cllr Browne sent apologies as he was attending an RDC meeting, but he sent a written report which the Clerk outlined – copy attached.

- 5a Rother Police Sgt Chris Varrall was present** and spoke to the meeting. He advised that Robertsbridge is deemed safe under the new model, where the focus is on threat / harm / risk, but it is essential that incidents are reported. The police are pleased to see that RDC has taken a positive move towards Civil Parking Enforcement as the force does not have the resources; in the mean-time they have committed to two hours per day on parking enforcement across the district by a PCSO – based on any obstructions which create safety concerns.
- 6. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR ANGHARAD DAVIES** – Cllr Davies expanded on some of the items contained in the ESCC Summary of Achievements 17/18 – copy attached.

There was a break for refreshments, an opportunity to view local information provided by the various clubs and groups, and to chat informally.

- 7. HANDS OF HOPE CHARITY** – Rachel Wood gave a brief introduction to the charity, which is passionate about growing / cooking / education to tackle problems such as obesity and loneliness. It has recently acquired 18 acres of land in Hawkhurst, including meadows and a walled garden, where they hope to set up a community hub to deliver community projects.

8. REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS / ORGANISATIONS, INCLUDING:

- a) **Rev Annette Hawkins** addressed the meeting, assuring that despite recent publicity regarding historic sexual abuse by a former Sussex clergyman (for which the Diocese has apologized unreservedly on behalf of the Church), the organisation is very different now and safeguarding is paramount. St Mary's has had a busy year with community events such as Remembrance, Advent prayer stations, Christmas carols; teddy bears zip wire from the church tower, Alpha course etc. Please look out for and support events. After Rev. Lusted left it was not certain we would get another vicar as the parish has to be self-supporting financially; if the Church closes there would be no more baptisms, weddings or funerals. The Church is accessible during the day, with the key held at the Salehurst Halt. Rev. Annette outlined the services, children's group and choir and urged people to get in touch if they need help and support of the Church. Rev. Annette is available to talk on the 1st and 3rd Thursday 9.30am – 11.30am at Robertsbridge Club.
- b) **Royal British Legion (Robertsbridge)** – Chairman Nick Moor reported that the Poppy Appeal goes from strength to strength, averaging £6,500 a year. This year is 100th anniversary of end of WW1. A decade after the end of WW1, the Royal British Legion organised for eleven thousand veterans and war widows to make a great pilgrimage to the battlefields of the Somme and Ypres, before marching to the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium on 8th August 1928 for a Remembrance service. This year, 90 years on they are repeating the event - GP90 - and the Robertsbridge Branch is raising £1,000 to send two members, Tony Wilson and Gerry Hodgson to represent Robertsbridge, carry the standard and lay a wreath. They are doing a sponsored cycle ride to raise funds and there will be a quiz night on 18/5/18 in the Church Room.
- c) **Robertsbridge Bonfire Society** – Roger Palamarczuk spoke to say most know the event – huge parade of flaming torches, big bonfire, fabulous fireworks, lots of noise and mess, amazing digital-age effigy blown up etc. He apologized that the field had not been cleaned up as quickly as it should have been and thanked the village for letting them take over for the day each year. With some of the money collected on the night they have reinstated their very popular annual 'vintage' lunch for the elders of the village. This year there will be several fundraisers including the auction of promises, and a new community event this year, a 10K run on 15th June starting at the Recreation Ground to fund the 2018 bonfire event, which will be on 17th November.

- d) **Robertsbridge Club** – Roger Palamarczuk also spoke for the Club which goes from strength to strength. Now has much higher member rate and usage. Profits made goes towards their three-year refurbishment plan, now in year two and having a new roof. There are further plans to ensure they can continue to provide an important service to the village. They have a large (9’x 6’) tv screen and can show pay-to view sports etc – for members and to hire. Regular live music events / private parties / poker school (official national organised group) which is very popular / darts / pool / bingo / quizzes / discos etc. Hoping to expand daytime use of the facilities. Please consider joining - all welcome.
- e) **Robertsbridge Wine Club** – Sean O’Hara introduced this new group for anyone who likes to drink wine! They have 40 plus people signed up. First event was on 5th April with a local wine merchant – lots of wine sampled and people were ‘happy’. Membership is free until the end of the year and then will be £10 single / £15 couple. Hoping to organise vineyard trips etc.
- f) **Community Speedwatch** – Freddie Pooke, the local group coordinator, explained that the group was set up 3-4 years ago but had not carried on due to personal circumstances but now able to start up again. It is supported managed by Sussex Police and is one of 49 groups nationally with 3500 members. Robertsbridge only has a few volunteers and needs more; when a few more have signed up there will be a training session, run by the Police coordinator. Detailed reports go to the Police and they do follow them up, especially repeat offenders. Groups are now able to buy their own kit which makes running the group easier; details have been given to the PC in the hope they will fund the kit.
- g) **Twinning** – Chairman David Faithful reported that the twinning with St Brice Courcelles was formally set up in 2000 and for the first 10 years was very successful, but membership has fallen from 150 to just 30, with very little support for events. It costs approximately £2,000 to run a coach trip. It was decided to suspend activities, but Robertsbridge is and will always be twinned with St Brice Courcelles. The groups have been looking at how to make it work more effectively and alternative ways of operating. There has been a meeting with the President/Chair of the French organisation to discuss the future. It was agreed that perhaps a joint website that individuals could visit to see what is happening in each town and decide to go if they want to – send messages to share transport; the website to act as facilitator but no organised events. It is very early stages, but the French President is very keen to do it. 2020 will be the 20th anniversary of the signing; St Brice will celebrate – should we? Need the PC on board – Sean in Twinning rep on PC and he met with their President and confirmed support. A working party is needed to decide what to do – 2 years to plan. Need volunteers to organise group and join working party. It would be good to see the partnership continue.
- h) **1st Robertsbridge Scout Group** – Sean O’Hara, Executive Chair of the group, explained that the beavers, cubs and scouts are oversubscribed. It is a huge benefit to the village and young people, and they do some fantastic activities. But they need a Group Scout Leader – a leader’s leader to support the group and are currently trying to recruit someone personable who could do it. They have a website and their contact details are on the PC website.
- i) **Cricket Club** – Allan Hughes, Chairman of the Club advised that the season is about to start with the first match on 28th April. There are three teams and a game every week during the season. People can join to play cricket or as a social member. They have a bar at the ground. The Cooper Cup in the summer is a great community event. They have a thriving junior section with 60+ young people joining the coaching sessions. They

continue through the winter at the Community College on Monday evenings. They have an under 10's tournament, which people are encouraged to come and watch. They are always in need of volunteers and anyone is welcome.

9. QUESTIONS / LOCAL MATTERS FROM THE FLOOR

- a) **Representatives of Moat Farm & Parsonage Farm** spoke about the recent application by RVR for a Transport & Works Act Order (TWAO), which among other things would give RVR to legal power to compulsorily purchase (CPO) some of their land to build the proposed railway. They outlined their main objections to the scheme: dangers relating to three new level crossings, potential increase in flood levels, no car parking provision, pollution from steam and diesel trains, no economic benefit to the area and the ability to compulsorily take land that the owners do not want to sell. They have started a campaign to fight the railway and requested local support by responding to the Secretary of State as part of the current consultation which is open until 31/5/19.

Several members of the public spoke in defence of the land owners' position, particularly regarding 'draconian' CPO measures for a non-essential service.

Trevor Streeter responded for RVR saying that the road barriers would only be down for 1 minute; people would be encouraged to join the railway at Tenterden or Northiam where there is plenty of parking; £1M benefit for the local economy – a video outlining these will be uploaded shortly to their website; the extended railway would create local jobs. He encouraged people to look at the consultation paperwork.

- b) **Vicarage in Fair Lane** - a resident asked what is happening to it as it is falling into disrepair and has suffered vandalism. Rev. Annette explained that the local Parochial Church Council (PCC) does not have any control over the land / building, it is the responsibility of the Diocese (Chichester), but they have nevertheless acted as intermediary and worked hard to deal with the problems for the sake of the neighbours, liaising with the police and Diocese. The building has now been properly and professionally secured so there should not be any further problems; she urged the public to dial 999 if there are any further incidents.

Cllr Stephen Hardy explained that the site is one of the four proposed in the NP, for a potential 6 – 9 dwellings; a new access proposal had satisfied Highways and the Examiner. The NPSG has no control over the timing of development; the Diocese will need to find a developer and, as with all development, they would have to apply for planning permission, which would be open to public consultation.

- c) **Dog Waste Bins** – a resident asked whether any more bins could be provided and suggested that the top of Fair Lane, before the footbridge over the A21 would be a good place for one. The Chairman explained that one additional one has been approved for Salehurst (near the Church) and will be installed by the Village Steward in due course.

10. NOTICES & INFORMATION – as it was late, no notices were given. The Chairman concluded the meeting by thanking everyone again for coming and thanking the WI for their lovely food.

Meeting closed at 9.40pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....