

SALEHURST & ROBERTSBRIDGE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting (Assembly) for Salehurst & Robertsbridge, held Monday 15 APRIL 2024, 7.30pm, Robertsbridge Hall, Station Road

Presiding: Cllr Nick Brown, Chairman of the Parish Council.

Present: **Electors:** 88 **Press:** None

Parish Council: Cllr Kirsty Barden; Cllr Natalie Bishop; Cllr Nick Brown; Cllr Clive Cooke; Cllr Fran Dulley; Cllr Sean O'Hara; Cllr Roger Palamarczuk; Cllr David Todd; Karen Ripley, Clerk; Gill Colquhoun, Asst. Clerk.

Rother District Council: None

East Sussex County Council: Cllr Paul Redstone

Doors were opened to the public at 7pm with opportunity to mingle, view local groups tables etc. The following groups and organisations had tables or displays:

The Villager (Editorial Team); Robertsbridge W.I.; Robertsbridge Wine Club; Robertsbridge Archaeological Society; Village Hall (Robertsbridge Community Association); Robertsbridge Scouts; Robertsbridge Bonfire Society; Helping Hands; Robertsbridge Arts Partnership; Parish Environment Group; Tree Wardens; Footpath Group; Robertsbridge & Brightling Repair Café; Age UK Monday Club; Oldwood Surgery PPG; Community Church Robertsbridge; St Marys Church/Friends of St Marys Church; St Mary's Bellringers.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He introduced Members of the Council and highlighted that there was a new vacancy following the resignation of Dawn Hill. Any parishioner was very welcome to apply (details to be advertised by the Clerk).

- 1. MINUTES OF THE PARISH MEETING 6 MARCH 2023** – the Chairman signed the Minutes of the last APM held on 6 March 2023. He advised that copies are available on the Parish Council Website.
- 2. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**—Cllr Nick Brown gave a short review of Council projects in the past year 1.New computer systems with official Councillor email addresses. 2.Coronation event at the Village Hall 3.Complete refurbishment of Recreation Ground play area 4.Two new dog waste bins in Fair Lane and George Hill 5.Recruitment of Gavin Ellenger as Village Steward – the Council is very pleased with his work and publicly thanked him. 6.Upgrading of street lighting to LED which will save electricity and money. Plans for this year including 1.The PC becoming legal custodians of Station Road car park (and installing cctv) 2.Parish Council long term visioning exercise 3.youth provision (youth centre building not fit for purpose and Youth Club not currently meeting in the village; the PC is trying to address lack of youth provision) 4.Pipers Field (old willow trees will soon be taken down by Gray Nichols and replanted in Autumn).

The Parish Council has given money to local and broader organisations this year including Salehurst School; REG (Christmas Capers); Robertsbridge Bonfire (road closure); Battle Area Community Transport (BACT); Robertsbridge Club; St Michaels Hospice; Community rail group for station planters; Kent & Sussex Air Ambulance.

- 3. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR SUE PROCHAK**– Cllr Prochak had given her apologies whilst on leave of absence from RDC. It is the first time in 35 years she has not attended the Annual Parish Meeting. Stephen Hardy provided a brief verbal report in her absence: 1.Good news; Rother has given £1.2 Million to help fund building of the new medical centre. 2.Homes England negotiating to develop the Mill Site (Cllr Brown confirmed that the Parish Council understood that Homes England have completed the deal). 3.Planning application for houses in Bishops Lane will likely be on the Rother Planning Committee agenda on 30th May – recommendation of Planning Officers will probably be to approve. 4.Money from the Government Levelling up Fund is being made available to establish an information hub in Robertsbridge (in Robertsbridge station car park). Cllr Killeen who is representing Robertsbridge ward in Sue’s absence had given her apologies as she was unwell with Covid. She had provided a report (published on Parish website).

- 4. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR PAUL REDSTONE** – Cllr Redstone highlighted 3 items in his published report (on Parish website): 1.Water - he was aware and dealing with Southeast Water regarding the regular loss of water in upper part of village (Brightling Road area). He had been informed that there had recently been a pressure release valve problem. 2.County Budget - the Council was well run so did not have to make cuts this year. A total budget of £538 million, most spent on care of children, and adult and social care, which explains why there is so little for roads. 3.Potholes – in particular Station Road. To get East Sussex roads to green standard would cost £300-400 Million. County are doing the best they can. Station Road was jetted last year and in this financial year Station Road and Brightling Road up to Bishops Lane will be properly resurfaced (currently planned for Summer Holidays). He recognised that the High Street also has potholes. Junction Road potholes had just been done and there are plans to resurface this road north of the two bridges. The Chairman highlighted that resurfacing of Station Road relied on the A21 safety works being completed and yet not much work is currently being completed at the Robertsbridge Roundabout. Cllr Redstone will check this.

Stuart Thompson, one of St Mary’s Church Wardens requested to speak regarding reordering of the church. He explained that this meant the church was intending to modernise the church; making it fit for purpose. Plans include changing use of its space to increase flexible seating capacity. The church had applied for planning permission to introduce new toilets and a refreshment area for the benefit of the whole community. Major fundraising will take place alongside applications for grants. All present were invited to view plans on display boards in the hall foyer; comments and suggestions were welcome. The Annual Parish Church meeting will take place in a week.

5. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

- Q. Cllr Redstone was thanked for his update on Station Road / Brightling Road but what about the amount of traffic? Is there anything we can do to reduce speed such as chicanes on Brightling Road? Has there been any attempt to see if the school coaches could drop off at the Station? (they add to pollution)
- A. Cllr Redstone will communicate with Robertsbridge Community College. The PC would need to match fund any chicanes which would be a long process and ESCC does not like traffic calming. The problem is how to stop HGVs as there is no real alternative route. The Chairman asked the RVR representative present if there will be as many large vehicles delivering to RVR in future. It was confirmed that there will not, and they have been asked to keep speed down.
- Q. Will the Hodson's Mill site development come with a certain amount of new business? Also is there any onus on those homes being affordable?
- A. The current plan under previous ownership do not include affordable housing. The Parish Council would hope that Homes England will be more affordable. It is possible that there will now be a new planning application, which may exclude office space.
- Q. Will works on Station Road include any improvements for pedestrians?
- A. Cllr Redstone does not know; he will find out.
- Q. Is there any information about resurfacing of Ludpit Lane?
- A. It is on list of works for September / October, but not sure full extent of works.
- Q. Could you ask that the roads people join up with the drains people?
- A. Highways do include drains and they have already completed a drain survey for Station Road. Patching, where not doing complete resurfacing, is much more cost effective.
- Q. A brief response was given on youth provision from Robertsbridge Scouts. The group, which is 115 years old, currently has 90 youth members 8 to 18 years old. Grateful for support from village and want to grow but desperate for adults to help in or out of uniform.
- A. Thank you.
- Q. Is there an update on A2100?
- A. It is ESCC responsibility. Not in Cllr Redstone's area but he can ask.
- Q. What is the view of the Parish Council to reduce the speed in the village?
- A. We have VAS to help reduce the speed. We have also joined up with 20s plenty and are in the process of trying to lobby and introduce the speed limit. So PC is looking at doing something in long term. The idea would be to have a legal speed limit (The

Parish Council could put up 20 mph signs, but they would not be legal, and we could not support an illegal act).

Q. But walking/pavements is difficult.

A. We are a medieval village, with restricted pedestrian width, and we need to be able to enforce a limit.

Q. A resident was worried about older people crossing the road.

A. Prior to 1989 crossing the High Street was more difficult.

Q. Pavements (high pavement, low pavement and Station Road). Who is responsible?

A. Brick ones are listed but they are all ESCC responsibility.

Q. A21 Silverhill speed limit has gone up to 50mph towards bottom of road. Why?

A. The Parish Council has been told this will be reviewed.

Q. In respect to building development what discussions do we have with power and water people to avoid the utilities situation in Wadhurst.

A. Cllr Redstone has met with SE Water and cited issues in Wadhurst and Mayfield (where the issue was identified as delivery capacity of mains). He did not think that Robertsbridge had that issue but will check. Cllr O'Hara explained that the major problem we have is that business is under pressure to minimise their expenditure and maximise customer expenditure. So if Robertsbridge never had another house built water usage would still go up. So big developers would pay full cost for new trenches. The reason Robertsbridge has mains gas is because British Gypsum had gas put in. There will be work on water treatment works to improve capacity.

Q. A member of the public advocated that the Council look at Rother website for Local Plan which is going out to consultation.

A. The Council is aware that the plan is going to consultation; it will be publicised.

Q. Why did we bother with a local neighbourhood plan if planning applications like Bishops Lane come forward where we do not want them? Bishops Lane fields (site of proposed development) have been spoilt by weedkiller.

A. None of the preferred development sites in Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan have been developed. Planning departments are judged on number of houses built.

Q. As Homes England have taken over Millsite does that mean they could produce very different houses?

A. Yes (Stephen Hardy). It is good news that Homes England do not land bank.

Cllr Natalie Bishop highlighted that the Parish is setting up an environment group to improve the local environment. Residents were invited to sign up.

There was a break for refreshments (the Chairman thanked Robertsbridge WI and Robertsbridge Wine Club for providing), mingling, time to view local information And talk informally with electors / local elected Councillors.

6. HOW TO USE A DEFIB - A DEMONSTRATION BY HURST GREEN & DISTRICT COMMUNITY RESPONDERS (GARY SPRAY AND WILF BROCKMAN MOODY)

A demonstration of AEDs (defibrillators) was provided. We have a number of defibs in the village which are all registered with the ambulance service and monitored by the Parish Council (details on Parish Council website). Once the defib is removed from its box it will tell you step by step what to do. The Community Responders cover a wide local area. Amongst other health emergencies they help elderly who have fallen at home, getting them up to avoid ambulance to hospital. They are planning a number of further drop-in demos. They recommended that those with key safes inform the surgery of their access codes so that they can tell the Responders in emergencies; subscribing to Lifeline is very useful; if you do ring 999 remember to turn the lights at the front of your house on.

7. NOTICES & INFORMATION FROM THE CLERKS

Further to earlier lobbying to improve access to the village from the A21 south, the Parish Council recently been informed that National Highways are looking at improvement (so no right turn towards Hastings from this junction and no right turn from the A21 into George Hill). They did not consider that a roundabout was suitable due to cost, space and it would not improve traffic flow. National Highways will consult on this in due course.

The Chairman rounded off the evening by thanking everyone for coming, particularly the WI. for delicious food and Wine Club – for supplying wine; all Councillors and Clerks.

Meeting closed: 21:21pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....