

# SALEHURST & ROBERTSBRIDGE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

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**MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting (Assembly) for Salehurst & Robertsbridge, held Monday 6 March 2023, 8pm, Robertsbridge Hall, Station Road**

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

**Present:**      **Electors:** 81                      **Press:** None

**Parish Council:** 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:** Cllr Sue Prochak

**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:

*Helping Hands; Rother Valley Railway; RAP; Eden Communities; Tree Wardens; Footpath Group; Wine Club; 20s Plenty; Bee Squared; Repair Café; Bonfire Society; PPG; St Mary's Church; Archaeological Society; WI; Wine Club*

**The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He thanked local organisations for their displays and the W.I. and wine club for once again kindly organising the refreshments for the evening.**

- 1. MINUTES OF THE PARISH MEETING 25 APRIL 2022** – the Chairman signed the Minutes of the last APM held on 25 April 2022. 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 the last year. In terms of planning a number of sites have resulted in planning applications or in process. (Cllr O'Hara will provide more information later in the meeting). There is a strong need for more affordable and smaller housing in the village. Parish Council projects in the past year have included 1. street lighting project (move to led lighting for environmental and financial reasons. 2. refurbishment of the cemetery and pavilion (thanks to residents who volunteered on this). 3. investment in new VAS vehicle activated signage (evidence to date shows it has had a positive effect). The Parish Council (PC) also continues to work on improving the Station Road car park and gives small grants to organisations inside and outside the village; organisations are invited to apply. The PC is also in the process of advertising for a new village steward following the retirement of Peter Pattenden.

**3. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR SUE PROCHAK**– Cllr Prochak had provided a report (on Parish website). Council tax would rise at maximum 10p a week. There will be elections in May when residents can stand as parish councillors. Rother Lottery has been running almost a year with 60p of each £1 goes to local organisations including a number of Robertsbridge groups. There will be grants available for village events for the King’s Coronation as well as village hall projects and a new grant for reduce, reuse, recycle projects. Rother are preparing their new Local Plan. A reminder that Helping Hands is available for all residents and is working on Warm Spaces project and Incredible Edibles. The HAIRE project highlighted isolation and not knowing where to go for help. An aural history project is taking place with thanks to Helping Hands and RAP.

**4. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR PAUL REDSTONE** – Cllr Redstone gave a brief report. ESCC was responsible for including Highways which they spend £41 million a year on. He recognised that potholes and roads, particularly Station Road, are a concern of Robertsbridge residents. Signs alone do not combat speeding; VAS can. He had also worked on flooding in Northbridge Street, the High Street and Ludpit Lane. He thanked the Parish Councillors and Clerks, the best of 7 Councils he works with.

#### **5. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

Q. What is happening about Village gateways (VG), previously proposed?

A. The Parish Council (PC) had taken the view that VAS will be more cost effective, and VG will not be viable.

Q. So will we get different signs?

A. A signage plan is on the cards.

Q. Could the VAS sign have a green smiley?

A. Councillors will check if it can be programmed to do this.

Q. Northbridge Street is a high-risk area for speeding. ESSC not happy with any unlicensed speed structures.

A. The PC can make enquiries and find out reasons. Highways are not malevolent.

Q. School traffic is an issue in Langham Road, including parking outside houses.

A. The PC understand this is an issue but cannot stop people parking where no yellow lines. The PC have worked with RCC on a project for traffic flows at the junction of Knelle Road and Langham Road with yellow lines at corner of junctions.

Q. Has the PC taken any stance on the threat of closure of the station ticket office?

A The ticket office may close, and the PC is aware that there are campaigns against closure in Battle and Rye. RDC is speaking to Huw Merriman MP and has written to the rail company.

- Q. There has been damage to retaining wall on High Street. Can drivers be held responsible for repairing it?
- A. In some cases it is an insurance issue. If anyone witnesses an incident, please let PC know.

- Q. Is there CCTV?
- A. There is outside One Stop.

- Q. Is there an update on RVR, and what is the PC position?
- A. Speak to RVR – we are awaiting decision. The PC view is that it needs to remain neutral as it has a responsibility to represent views of all the residents.

- Q. Vans are often parked on pavement in High Street, is that OK?
- A. No it is not legal.

- Q. Is there any point in having High Street signs?
- A. Paul Redstone to ask.

- Q. What about potholes in Station Road? Surely the whole surface needs to be completely stripped.
- A. It has been temporarily fixed. Cllr Redstone has pushed very hard for proper resurfacing of Station Road (in his report).

- Q. Difference between resurfacing and temporary fixing. There is poor resurfacing. Who is holding people to account for substandard work?
- A. East Sussex Highways Department inspects pothole repairs undertaken by highways contractor – at no cost to county if decide repairs are substandard.

- Q. What about using JCB new machine for fixing potholes?
- A. Cllr Redstone had seen this but 1.it uses tarmac filling so not suitable when very wet) and 2. costs a lot more per pothole.

*There was a break for refreshments, mingling, time to view local information  
And talk informally with electors / local elected Councillors.*

## **6. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN & LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SITES – AN UPDATE FROM THE SEAN O’HARA CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP ON THE CURRENT POSITION.**

**Why?** Government decided that it needs lots more houses and 155 identified by Rother in Robertsbridge. We use the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) produced in 2015 to comment on minor developments, but the main purpose was to have a positive impact on where the 155 dwellings would be located and what they would be like. Also it gives the Parish 25% Community Infrastructure Levy on non-affordable homes (expected to be over £250,000 which we can spend locally on what is needed). An independent examiner gave most of what Robertsbridge wanted; some environmental obligations were not allowed.

**What has happened since?** Sadly no development on any sites identified in the Neighbourhood Plan for various reasons including changes in partner developers: Covid. As Rother is well behind in delivering housing number it makes it difficult for us to say we will not support any site not within the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Site plans**

*The Mill* – currently 98 houses with planning permission. The latest hold up is change in developer in alliance with landowner. A different method of construction resulted in need for a new application.

*Grove Farm* has full planning permission for 24 houses on south site and undecided on 8 houses on north site.

*Vicarage* – the Diocese has agreement with developer to sell the site, subject to gaining planning permission.

*2 sites behind Heathfield Gardens* – 2 owners with one access point owned by 1 owner – makes agreement difficult. No formal progress.

### **Non-NP sites**

*Site adjacent to Culverwells* – already approved prior to NP. It has taken years to reach agreement on ownership of the land. New application includes a new health care centre. Does not include affordable housing. The PC have submitted our comments, we do not agree with inclusion of 5 bed houses.

The PC recognises that we cannot make a landowner develop a site because they will always develop sites where will they make most profit. Robertsbridge is quite expensive to develop. Also for any developments a new thing is all electric with implications for electric network.

We are now looking forward to Rother consulting on its new Local Plan because we want to make sure our NP is up to date with that Rother Plan which we have been told will be much greener. Parish Councillors will meet with Rother Planning team. Rother District Council has invited additional sites around Rother, including Robertsbridge. So in summary the situation is in flux, but the PC is fully committed to NP being enforced effectively.

**7. NOTICES & INFORMATION FROM THE CLERKS**

The PC is planning a summer event this year to be merged with Coronation event.

There is awareness that there is a need for more youth provision for teenagers.

The children’s play area will be refurbished with money from South East Water.

Everyone was encouraged to stand as a Parish Councillor at the elections on 4<sup>th</sup> May.

Flood defence exercise to take place on 20 April 9.30am.

**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. Don’t forget to stand for election.

**Meeting closed: 21:25pm.**

**Chairman**.....

**Date**.....