



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SALEHURST & ROBERTSBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL
TUESDAY 19 MAY 2026, VILLAGE HALL, STATION ROAD, ROBERTSBRIDGE. 7.30PM

Present: Cllr Natalie Bishop; Nick Brown; Cllr Fran Dulley; Cllr Mark Hamilton; Cllr Gaynor Leeves; Cllr Simon Longhurst; Cllr Sean O'Hara; Cllr Paul Pitman; Cllr David Todd

Also in Attendance: Mrs Karen Ripley (Clerk); Mrs Gill Colquhoun (Asst. Clerk); Cllr Sue Prochak (RDC). ~~Cllr Paul Redstone (ESCC)~~ [KRipley]

General Public: None **Press:** None **Presiding:** **Item 1** Cllr Nick Brown
Items 2-15 Cllr David Todd

Public Questions and Comments – *there were no members of the public present.*

Items 1 – 10 on the Agenda constitute the Annual Meeting.

- 1) **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL** - the Chairman invited nominations for the position of Chairman. David Todd was nominated by Simon Longhurst and seconded by Mark Hamilton. Nick Brown was nominated by Natalie Bishop and seconded by Sean O'Hara. A vote was conducted by show of hands. Each nominee received three votes; there were two abstentions. The Chairman adjourned the meeting for five minutes. When he resumed the meeting, he advised that he would stand aside as Chairman, in favour of Cllr David Todd. He also gave his resignation as a Councillor and left the meeting. Cllr David Todd was elected as Chairman of the Council, signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Chairman and took the Chair. The Clerk countersigned his Declaration.

Before he left the meeting, Nick Brown was thanked by Cllr Sean O'Hara, on behalf of the Council, for all his hard work and service during his time on the Council.

- 2) **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN** – Sean O'Hara was nominated by Natalie Bishop, seconded by Simon Longhurst and elected unopposed. He signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Vice Chairman. The Clerk countersigned his Declaration.

Before continuing with the agenda, the Chairman asked that a vote of thanks be recorded in the minutes to the outgoing Chairman, Nick Brown, for his eleven years of service on the Council, the last seven as Chairman.

- 3) **APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE** – apologies for absence were received and approved for Cllr Francesca Dulley. Cllr Paul Redstone, recently re-elected as East Sussex County Councillor, had also given apologies for absence, due to a prior engagement.
- 4) **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – Cllr Simon Longhurst declared an interest in agenda item 12f.v, request for a donation, as he is the Chair of Trustees of 1st Robertsbridge Scout Group.
- 5) **APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION** – none.
- 6) **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 16 MARCH 2026** – the Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes as a correct record of the meeting. (Matters arising from the Minutes to be taken at item 11).
- 7) **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES** – appointments were approved as follows:

1066 Community Rail Steering Group	David Todd
East Sussex Association of Local Councils Ltd (ESALC)	Sean O’Hara, David Todd
Patient Participation Group (PPG)	Paul Pitman
Robertsbridge Arts Partnership (RAP)	Simon Longhurst
Robertsbridge Community Association (RCA)	Simon Longhurst
Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC)	Clerk, David Todd
Salehurst Charities	Clerk, Simon Longhurst
Tree Warden	Caroline Knight

- 8) **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS AND LEAD COUNCILLORS** – appointments were approved as follows:

COMMITTEES (FULL DELEGATED POWERS)	
Cemetery	The Chairman or Vice Chairman, Clerk, Mark Hamilton
Planning	Natalie Bishop, Francesca Dulley, Mark Hamilton, Gaynor Leeves, Sean O’Hara (Chairman), David Todd

WORKING GROUPS (ADVISORY - NO DELEGATED POWERS)	
Change Management Group	David Todd (to lead), Sean O’Hara; Simon Longhurst plus: <i>Non-Council member Gillian Branford</i>
Finance Working Group	Clerk/RFO, Chairman, Sean O’Hara, Gaynor Leeves
General Purposes Group	Chairman, Vice Chairman, Simon Longhurst

LEAD COUNCILLORS		
	LEAD COUNCILLOR	ALTERNATE(S)
ECONOMY	Simon Longhurst	Mark Hamilton
ENVIRONMENT	Natalie Bishop	David Todd
COMMUNICATIONS	Gaynor Leeves	Paul Pitman
EDUCATION & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	Natalie Bishop	Gaynor Leeves
INFRASTRUCTURE	Sean O'Hara	Natalie Bishop
AMENITIES & LEISURE	Simon Longhurst	Francesca Dulley & Mark Hamilton
INTERNAL OPERATIONS	Nick Brown	Sean O'Hara
POLICE & CRIME MATTERS	Mark Hamilton	

9) MEMBERSHIPS AND ANNUAL FEES TO OUTSIDE BODIES – approved as follows:

National Association of Local Councils	£178.19 (26/27 figure)
East Sussex Association of Local Councils	£775.14 (26/27 figure)
Rother Association of Local Councils	£ 42.00 (25/26 figure)
Society of Local Council Clerks:	£253.00 (2026 figure)

10) DATES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2026 / 2027 – confirmed as follows:

Planning Committee Meetings Youth Centre, 7.30pm		Full Council Meetings Robertsbridge Hall, 7.30pm	
		Tues 19	May 2026 (<i>includes Annual Meeting - Election of Chairman/Committees etc.</i>)
1	June 2026	15	June 2026 – Accts/Annual Return only. Held at the Youth Centre
6	July 2026	20	July 2026
3	August 2026		
7	September 2026	21	September 2026
5	October 2026		
2	November 2026	16	November 2026
7	December 2026		
4	January 2027	18	January 2027 (<i>inc. budget approval</i>)
1	February 2027		
1	March 2027	15	March 2027
5	April 2027		
Monday 19 April - Annual Village Meeting (Assembly) (meeting of, and for, the community – NOT a Council meeting, but Councillors expected to attend)			
4 (TUES)	May 2026 (3 rd is Bank Holiday)	17	May 2026

End of annual meeting - commencement of normal business

11) MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES - for information only:

- a) Asset Devolution from RDC (25/26-59a)** – update from Rother District Council (RDC) expected soon to advise which assets will be involved in first phase. The Station Road Car Park and Toilets and Bishops Meadow are already held by the Parish Council under long leases. The other is the grassed play area in Heathfield Gardens. Cllr Prochak advised there is now some doubt as to whether the freehold of leased assets will actually be devolved – this needs to be clarified.
- b) Land at the Clappers (25/26-59b)** – quotes for replacement fencing, groundworks and new bench still pending (Clerk to action).
- c) Dogs on Leads / Dog poo campaign** – Cllr Pitman to circulate his research findings to Members.

12) INTERNAL OPERATIONS (Lead – Chairman)

- a) Youth Centre** – the Chairman will speak to Nick Brown to establish the current state of play. Cllr Prochak expressed concern regarding selling off the Youth Centre, stating it would not be popular with residents. She said that Lesley Lambeth, RVA, had identified the lack of youth provision in the village as an issue / concern. The Chairman explained that the priority was to get the Trusteeship back from ESCC into local hands. Currently, with no youth provision happening at the Youth Centre, the Trustees (ESCC) are failing to fulfil the terms of the Trust. The Community College has expressed some interest in local Trusteeship; Cllr Bishop offered to discuss this with the Headteacher. The Chairman felt that all Members should know the building and to that end it was agreed that the Clerk will give all Members a guided tour at 7pm on 15 June, ahead of the Parish Council Meeting (at the Youth Centre).
- b) Digital and Data Compliance** – the following documents were considered:
 - i) Data Protection Policy** – following amendments recommended by Cllr Todd the revised draft was considered and approved.
 - ii) Records Retention Policy** – following amendments recommended by Cllr Todd the revised draft was considered and approved.
- c) Risk Management** – the updated Management Document was considered. Members approved the document subject to the addition of the storage container and telephone box. Cllr Longhurst agreed to draft the section on the container. Cllr O'Hara agreed to monitor the document going forward and prioritise any safety and compliance issues.
- d) CCTV at Station Road Car Park** – following investigations with various contractors, Cllr Longhurst reported that there were numerous difficulties in providing this, including the lack of suitable space to house the equipment (too far from the Parish Office). Members considered this and agreed that the problems and considerable cost outweighed any need – there had been insufficient issues over the last few years to justify provision at the current time.

e) **About Robertsbridge Website** – David Allen, owner and creator of the site has asked the Parish Council to consider taking over funding the hosting of the site, as it currently stands, as he will no longer be updating it. Members felt it was important to ensure the valuable historic amenity / record is retained for public use and agreed to take over responsibility for the hosting. Cllr Longhurst agreed to discuss the site with the Archaeological Society to see if they might be interested in taking it on in the future, as part of their archive project. The site can be seen here: [About Robertsbridge](#)

f) **Accounts and Financial Matters**

i) **Receipts and Payments** – Cllr Pitman queried a receipt, which the Clerk explained was for the purchase of Exclusive Rights to a burial plot in the Cemetery. Also, whether Members should see the balance held in the bank. The Clerk explained that all signatories on the bank accounts can view the accounts online and that the bank statements are seen every month by a Member of the Finance Working Group, when the bank reconciliations completed by the Clerk are checked. Any Member can ask to see the bank statements at any time, and all Members will receive the full reconciliation of all accounts with the year-end documents in June. All receipts and payments for March and April 2026 were noted and approved.

ii) **Financial Regulations** – the revised / updated Financial Regulations, as completed and recommended by the Finance Working Group were considered and approved.

iii) **Review of Internal Controls** – the Chairman confirmed that this had been carried out by the Finance Working Group.

iv) **Review of Standing Orders** – the Chairman (for Finance Working Group) confirmed that this is in progress and will be completed for consideration at the Parish Council Meeting in July.

v) **Grant / donation requests** – the following requests were considered:

- **Asgard Explorer Scouts** – a donation of £400 was considered and approved towards Gibraltar trip. Cllr Longhurst declared an interest in this item and did not take part in the discussion / decision.
- **Kent, Sussex & Surrey Air Ambulance** – a donation of £400 towards service was considered and approved.
- **Sussex Outreach Support** – a donation of £800 towards the Youth Outreach Programme, including three specific events in Robertsbridge was considered and approved; funds to be taken from the Youth Earmarked Reserve.

g) **Annual Parish Meeting (Assembly)** – Members discussed the APM held 20/4/26. It had been well attended but it would be good to attract some different, younger residents in future. Katy Bourne, Police and Crime Commissioner had been well received by the audience, who expressed their concerns regarding the lack of visible policing and contact with the PCSO. Members felt the format for next year's meeting should be discussed nearer the time, with suggestions for a speaker to attract attendance.

- h) **Consultation – Local Government Review (LGR)** – The government has launched a consultation on its proposal to move parts of the Lewes District of East Sussex into an expanded Brighton and Hove, under its process for local government reorganisation. It asks whether the proposals would strengthen local government, services and finances. Members favoured the One East Sussex proposal, as did Rother District Council. The Chairman agreed to draft a response. (See also the RALC report, agenda 13e.i below).
- i) **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – RDC Details of next funding round** – (details emailed to Members 12/5/26) – Cllr Prochak suggested restoration of the brick pavements in the Conservation Area could be considered. The Chairman agreed to look at this with her, what was required, who could do it and how much it would cost. Cllr Prochak agreed to check whether the criteria is for projects over £30,000.

13) **REPORTS**

- a) **Cllr Paul Redstone, ESCC** – report for April previously circulated to Members (published). No report for May due to Elections. Cllr Redstone was not present but had emailed to express his gratitude at being re-elected and his commitment to continue to serve the residents of Salehurst & Robertsbridge. He advised that the three Conservative Councillors will not have any deal, formal or informal, with any other party and will be ‘constructive opposition’ holding other parties to account, always driven by the needs of the residents of East Sussex.
- b) **Cllr Susan Prochak, RDC** – Cllr Prochak advised that a Programme Director, Emily George, has been appointed by the continuing authority to look at work streams for LGR; she will be based at Rother. RDC food waste collection has started. RDC passed a motion objecting to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) proposals which remove the powers of local council planning committees. Big changes are on the way in planning. The Chairman raised a question about the number of backlog enforcement cases, which she had stated in her April report would be reduced to fifty; Cllr Prochak agreed to check.
- c) **Clerks’ Report** – the report was received and noted. Community SpeedWatch was discussed. Cllr Hamilton reported that only two people have actually signed up and we should continue to advertise for volunteers. It was suggested that Cllr Hamilton could have a recruitment stall at the next Repair Café on 11 July.
- d) **Village Steward** – the list of tasks completed was received and noted.
- e) **Reports / updates from Council Reps / Leads** – to receive any reports.
 - i) **RALC** – Minutes of the meeting held on 14/4/26 are available on the RALC website: [Minutes and Agendas – Rother Association of Local Councils](#). The following matters had been discussed: use of AI in local councils, LGR task force (a paper on proposals will be distributed to all member councils for comment), and a proposal to try to bring local mediation for Councillor complaints made to the RDC Monitoring Officer. The next meeting is on Wednesday 8 July 2026 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill.

- ii) **Patient Participation Group** – Cllr Pitman advised that the minutes are available on the Oldwood Surgery website. He reported that work on the access road for the new surgery will begin later this year. Also, there are Wellbeing sessions run by Community Church in the Youth Centre on a Thursday afternoon, and that Sue MacGregor will be speaking at the next PPG meeting about the Walking for Health initiative.
- iii) **Police and Crime Matters** – Cllr Hamilton had nothing further to add (see item 13c Clerks' Report).
- iv) **1066 Community Rail Line** – Cllr Todd had no new updates to add.
- v) **Robertsbridge Arts Partnership** – Cllr Longhurst advised that the AGM will take place on 4 June.
- vi) **Robertsbridge Community Association** – Cllr Longhurst advised that Water Hemlock (poisonous if eaten) is growing on the flood bund beside the Village Hall, so warning signs have been put up to manage any risk.

14) AMENITIES AND LEISURE (Lead – Cllr Simon Longhurst)

- a) **Storage Container** – planning permission is not necessary as it is more than five meters from a boundary. Members were pleased with the excellent condition of the container. Wooden beams have been ordered to raise it a little off the ground. Once that is done, the racking (previously purchased) will be installed.
- b) **Station Road Toilets drain works** – Members considered and approved a quote for remedial works to defective joints in the underground drain pipes to reduce incidents of blockages. It was further agreed to sign up for a monthly planned maintenance program (one hour per month) to keep drains flushed and clear.
- c) **Condition of Recreation Ground after Bonfire 2025** – Cllrs Brown and Longhurst had met with Ria, Chair of the Bonfire Society, who acknowledged the poor state of the field following the event. It was agreed that a meeting will be held prior to the 2026 event to discuss details, including use / closure of the Pocket Park and timings for set-up.
- d) **Rubbish / Litter in Recreation Ground** – Members discussed the considerable amounts of litter frequently left in the Recreation Ground. It was agreed that no further litter bins were feasible, and Cllr Bishop agreed to speak to the Community College about encouraging pupils to put litter in the bins provided or take away with them.
- e) **Rural Youth Events Robertsbridge** – two further evening events are to be held at Robertsbridge Youth Centre, facilitated by Sussex Outreach Support, on Thursday 25 June and Thursday 24th September.
- f) **Volunteer Footpath Team** – Cllr Longhurst reported that the group is close to launching the guide to 22 walks, which he will circulate to Members and uploaded to the website. A guided walk is also planned.

15) INFRASTRUCTURE (Lead – Cllr Sean O’Hara)

a) Planning Matters

- i) Planning Committee Meetings** – the minutes of Meetings held on 8 April, and 6 May 2026 (previously published) were received and noted.
- ii) Sites** - the appeal decision is awaited on the Bishops Lane site. The Inspector’s decision will be final. The only further action possible would be a judicial review in relation to the process. A planning application has been submitted by Homes England for the Mill Site and is currently being validated by Rother District Council for consultation. Rother District Council is awaiting drainage reports from the developers in relation to the old Vicarage site.

- b) Urban Grass Verge Cutting** – Members considered the three quotes received and it was agreed to engage Orchard Landscapes (who already do several other parishes).

The meeting closed at: 10.05pm

Chairman.....

Date.....