



ROTTINGDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

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Rottingdean is the only local (parish) council within the unitary authority area of Brighton & Hove Electors.
Councillors are elected on the same 4-year timetable as applies to Brighton & Hove City Councillors.

**You are invited to come to the Annual Village Meeting
April 27th 2017 in the Whiteway Centre at 7.30 pm**

Dear Residents,

I am pleased to be able to quote advice given by a psychiatrist to BBC's correspondent, Frank Gardner, during his slow recovery from life-changing bullet injuries: "Don't dwell on the things you can't do; concentrate on the things that you can do, for you will find there is so much more you can do than things you can't."

However idealistic, there are things in Rottingdean your Parish Council cannot do. We cannot widen our historic High Street or instruct motorists to stop using the B2123. We cannot instruct residents to shop in our retail outlets or to stop all development and growth in our gem of a Village.

A first step, therefore, is to decide what can and cannot be done; the next step is to decide who can do it. Many responsibilities fall to our cash-strapped City Council, and there is regular communication between your Parish and City Councils to clarify and pursue these issues, including road repairs, waste disposal, traffic and legal enforcement, planning, infrastructure support and so much more. And around the borders of these there are issues your Parish Council is prepared to work in collaboration with the City to help secure for Rottingdean, things the City alone is unable to afford. Most of these are listed amongst our current Projects.

And even around the things we cannot realistically do alone, like significantly reducing traffic, there are things we can try to do to reduce dangerous traffic fumes, for the health and safety of those who use Rottingdean. Our draft Neighbourhood Plan cannot stop growth and development but it can create a locally derived legal framework within which developers will work to progress growth in ways that can also enhance Rottingdean.

The realisation that there are things we can do is what drives your elected Council on. That's not to say that progress and change is easy, it can be frustratingly sluggish and I have heard the term 'wading through treacle' quoted more than once! We are nine elected, motivated and willing people of Rottingdean. Top professionals sometimes succeed in using high-powered arguments to defeat our lay knowledge, but, we are guided by our Codes of Practice and advice from City Officers, to pursue our goals and win a number of successes for Rottingdean Residents. This newsletter, and the AVM it advertises, will highlight some of our successes and some of our continuing stumbling blocks. We are facilitated by the precept charged to every household and this too will be discussed.

We cannot and do not work alone and we are indebted to so many including voluntary groups and organisations, traders, Ward Councillors, local experts, our Clerk and of course, You the Parishioner without whom we could not exist. Eight other Councillors and myself are proud to be counted among you all. Thank-you

Bob Webzell – Chairman, Rottingdean Parish Council – March 2017

Structure of council

The Parish Council's re-structure enabled us to manage the different aspects of our work. We hope that you have also found it easier to contact the right person should you have any issues. (Names in **bold** indicate team leaders)

Strategy, Communication Group - includes the website, media and Parish communications, Governance and the Neighbourhood Plan. The team consists of **Bob Webzell**, John Bryant, Heather Butler, and Sue John.

The Village Community - includes trade and tourism, arts, charity, village events, local community groups and activities and Police Liaison. The team consists of John Bryant, Anthony Delow, Ian Wilson, Heather Butler and **Graham Sheppard**.

The Built Environment - includes roads and paths, transport, housing, projects and the Planning Sub Committee. The Team consists of Heather Butler*, **John Bryant***, Kieran Fitsall*, Anthony Delow, Graham Sheppard* and Sue John. (* indicates a member of the Planning Sub-Committee)

The Natural Environment - includes Beacon Hill, Seafront regeneration, The Green, Pond and pollution. The team consists of **Anthony Delow**, Ian Wilson Sue John and Bob Webzell

Standards and Finance - John Bryant is the Responsible Finance Officer and Bob Webzell the Deputy Finance Officer. As Chair of the Parish Council, Bob Webzell is responsible for maintaining standards.

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group - **Sue John**, Bob Webzell, Heather Butler, John Bryant, Kieran Fitsall

Annual Update

Strategy and Communication Group

SCAG is our interestingly ambiguous acronym for our team of Councillors involved in steering Strategy and Communications for the Parish Council. Our advice, which needs the approval of full Council, helps to structure our meeting format, website, communications and working systems and neighbourhood planning, assuring that groups of 'expert' Councillors discuss issues and make recommendations generally before matters come to full Council for resolution or agreed action. We feel this helps the flow, cohesion and effectiveness of our meetings and avoids possible disagreement in public, although we can all enjoy a feisty debate on occasions!

Neighbourhood Plan

I believe that for me and the other members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, it sometimes feels as though we are attempting to paint the Forth Bridge, i.e. we feel as though this task will never reach completion.

However, four years on from when we started work we now have

- A Village Survey which identified residents' priorities
- A physical audit of the built environment within the Parish
- An analysis of the village-wide Housing Needs Survey
- A Scoping Report as groundwork for a Sustainability Appraisal of the Plan
- An appraisal of green and open spaces within the Parish

In recent months we have been revisiting early drafts to draw up draft policies for the Neighbourhood Plan which we believe reflect the priorities and concerns of our parishioners and which will provide additional in depth Planning Guidance for any developers with an interest in Rottingdean. The Plan will include Design Principles, which we want to see respected, as well as guidance on what development is appropriate and proportionate for the village.

Once the Parish Council has approved work so far, we are keen to consult you, the residents, on this early draft, before submitting it to Brighton and Hove. We have an added challenge that the local authority has to test that our Plan is in conformity with the City Plan, as well as the National Planning Policy Framework. But you will have the ultimate say – The Plan can only be adopted by Local Referendum.

The Village Community

We aim where possible to proactively reach out to the village community, but also, incidental conversations, ideas and requests come to us and we then work to respond promptly, helpfully and practically whether it be by signposting, supporting, facilitating or allocating direct financial assistance. And, as you will notice from the following list of the past year's activities, no task is too small..... from ducks to recreational facilities; all are treated with equal importance.

- Supporting local schools, sports clubs and groups
- Organising the pruning of trees and hedging.
- Deans co-operation towards raising awareness of community resilience.
- Awarding grants to a range of local community groups.
- Continuing to facilitate the opening and closing of Kipling Gardens.
- Working with BHCC to sustain and develop our library facilities.
- Maintenance and siting of benches and bins
- Promoting the Visitor Information Point.
- Clarifying about how best to feed the ducks on the village pond.
- Facilitating the donation of a table tennis table to St Margaret's School.
- Participating in regular meetings with the Local Action Team.
- Taking part in the St Margaret's Christmas Tree Festival.
- Highlighting the need for volunteers across a range of organisations.
- Organising the painting of the posts around the Village Pond.
- Working with BHCC to ensure the sustainability of our leisure facilities.
- Improving safety at the Recreation Ground.
- In partnership with PARC, maintaining and improving play facilities.
- Working with the British Legion towards reinstating a beacon on Beacon Hill.
- Initiating the installation of bike racks around the Village.

Finance and Standards

At the time of writing the 2016/17 Parish Council accounts have yet to be completed. However, the forecast for the year end is within the agreed operational budget for the year.

The Parish Council agreed a Precept for 2017/18 at its meeting on 6th February 2017. After detailed debate the Parish Council agreed to increase the Precept by 1%. Thus, at Band D the household Precept will be £28.85p. This will mean that a Band D Precept payer will pay 28p per year more, just over 2p per month.

This small increase reflects the increase in costs due to inflationary pressures.

The Precept will be £44,579; that together with £2,458 from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme means the total funds for the Parish Council for the year will be £47,037. Included in this total is a small increase due to a growth of the tax base.

The Parish Council has some funds built up over the years available for Projects for the benefit of Rottingdean and its residents as indicated in last year's newsletter. Please see below for further detail of these Projects.

This year your Parish Council has supported by way of grants/donations a number of village activities, including Rottingdean in Bloom, Smugglers Night, Rottingdean Arts Music Festival and towards the repair of the flint walls in the Churchyard.

Built Environment

The Built Environment encompasses a wide remit from highways to planning applications and all our work is heavily dependent on the City Council and its Officers.

Our Projects

It is part of the Parish Council's vision for Rottingdean to maintain and improve the environs of the village for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Whilst we recognise that some of the projects we have been developing which involve the City Council are complex in design and delivery and require substantial work by ourselves and the City Officers, we remain disappointed with the progress made and are continuing to pressure the City Council to play their part.

The following Projects are part of the continuing improvements to Rottingdean.

Street Lighting in the conservation area of Rottingdean

Our aim is to improve the street scene within the conservation area by replacing the mixture of modern light columns and lanterns, with "Windsor Style" lanterns and columns more in keeping with heritage of the village and similar to those in front of the Church and in Vicarage Lane.

This is to be done in a phased approach over the next two to three years, both to spread the cost and the work schedule. Our plan agreed with the City Council was to complete at least phase one, within this financial year. However at the time of writing, work has yet to start and it now seems unlikely to happen before the end of March 2017. The City Council is to meet some of the costs and the Rottingdean Preservation Society has agreed to make a contribution.

At the same time all the streetlights will be converted to LEDs which provide a better whiter light than at present. An example can be seen in Golden Square, between Lloyds Chemist and TESCO. The lights will also be fitted with the capability for dimming; say between 11pm and 6am. The new lights will have a lower running cost and in general cost less in maintenance.

Park Road Toilets improvement

Our aim is to refurbish the existing facility and to provide a disabled toilet.

We are in discussions with the City Council and the original drawings are being located. The City Council are ascertaining a budget provision This will be a shared Project between the Parish and the City Council.

Lower High Street Improvements

Our aim is to create an area of shared use, for pedestrians in the lower High Street, thus creating an open space between the White Horse and the Coach House and other retailers. This would increase accessibility & the popularity of that area enhancing the use of the Terraces for the enjoyment of local people and tourists.

The Parish Council has now resolved to phase improvements. The first phase proposal is to create a shared space, paved area on the left where the existing road extends to the front, above the steps to the undercliff.

The plans are at an early stage and consultations with the City Council are on going.

Road Safety and Parking

Parking continues to be a contentious issue, as seen in recent news articles, and balancing the need to provide a turnover of spaces without overzealous enforcement can prove difficult. Ensuring the safe movement of traffic around the village has been the focus this last year, with a marked parking space put in outside The Plough, to allow vehicles to pass more easily, and double yellow lines painted in Court Ord Road, to make accessing and leaving the junction with Falmer Road less dangerous. An outcome from BHCC to a petition from residents about traffic measures on Dean Court Road is awaited and the outcome of the traders survey will allow us to inform our priorities for the coming year.

Air Quality

Pollution continues to be a significant concern for the village. Despite the City Council labelling our High Street 'a local issue', we are working with Brighton University to provide high quality data to both inform our decisions and to add weight to our continuing negotiations. A 'Joint Task-Force' with representatives from both RPC and City Council has been formed at which we will press harder for solutions that are best for the village.

Planning

The past year has yet again been a challenging one on the planning front. Recently a Government Inspector agreed to the development of 32 houses on the Falmer Avenue/ Bishopstone Drive site.

The Government Inspector also agreed for the development of 9 houses on Falmer Road. Meadow Vale has also gone to the Government Inspector and we are still awaiting a final decision.

The St Aubyns site has been sold to Fairfax Properties, they are in pre planning discussions with BHCC and are aiming to consult on their plans with the Parish Council and residents later in the year.

Added to this are the continued planning requests for extensions and property modifications. We try to assess these by the same guiding principles:-

- Is it fair and reasonable for neighbours?
- How does it affect the street scene?
- Is it in the conservation area?

We are given the opportunity to comment on all plans in the same way as the general public are, however we do have an advantage as we can consider developments across the whole of Rottingdean as opposed to each on an individual basis. If we do decide to object then it has to be for clear planning reasons alone.

We are also endeavouring to raise the profile of Rottingdean and our issues with BHCC. We believe that planning decisions should not be considered as isolated developments but should be considered parish wide as the impact of all these developments together would cause considerable stress on our already creaking infrastructure.

Finally, may I make the usual request for Parishioners to contact the Parish Council at the earliest opportunity if they wish to comment on a planning application so that your views can be included in our response to BHCC.

Seafront Regeneration

Seafront Toilets

Once again our wonderful seafront loos were entered into a national competition and once again awarded the highest accolade by achieving Platinum recognition, the highest level available!

For the third year in a row the loos have seen very little vandalism compared to the other sites under the management of BHCC.

Access Ramp on the Terraces

The access ramp has now been in use for over 24 months and has now weathered and blended into the landscape.

The Electricity Kiosk

The large and rather overpowering brick built electricity kiosk at the southern end of the Lower High Street has been a very controversial subject in the village ever since it was built three years ago to house the upgraded electricity supply connections and meters for the loos and the café. It has taken two frustrating years to at long last have the connection moved to a new site and housed in a new kiosk. This is now to the south of Highcliff Court along what used to be the old cliff path.

Natural Environment

The village pond is reaping the rewards of the annual maintenance programme with the peripheral plant life being regularly cut back, the aquatic plant life held in check ensuring the pond remains a haven for the waterfowl. The pond has now achieved the critical balance of appearing to be a natural feature whilst masking the human maintenance involved.

Beacon Hill Nature Reserve continues to develop under the care and protection of Friends of Beacon Hill volunteers who regularly devote their time to carrying out much needed maintenance work on a regular basis. The lease has now finally been signed by Beacon Hub with BHCC for the old golf course building; they have now opened a café and are converting the building into an educational centre.

