



## **Minutes of the Meeting of Rottingdean Parish Council on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2025 at the Whiteway Centre**

Present Cllr Nixon, Chair, Cllr Lawrence, Cllr Levins, Cllr Lowery, Cllr Cherrie, Cllr Hicken, Cllr Evans  
C Hayes, Parish Clerk

Public Gallery: Ward Cllr Fishleigh, Ward Cllr Earthey, 52 residents.

Questions from the public

The following questions were raised by members of the public.

### Closure of the Library

- What was the cost to run the library and how much would need to be raised for the Parish Council to run.
- Teaching staff from local schools encouraged children to go to and join the library as a way of reducing screen time and improving reading. Not all pupils could afford the cost of buying books and therefore did not read enough. The Library was as a sanctuary with singing classes and for reading, learning and enjoying through books.
- The Grange was a cultural hub with library as a central part of it which needed to be maintained.
- Accessibility for the elderly and mums with pushchairs to nearby libraries would be difficult especially in the winter months. They would need to catch a bus and walk to the bus stop on the coast road in strong winds and rain. The proposed closure would be discriminatory against families, people with mobility issues and the elderly
- One resident sympathised with the case for closure given the relative wealth in Rottingdean when other areas by be more needy. However, the evidence did not provide information about the relationship of opening hours to footfall that was needed to understand the proposal along with a detailed breakdown of the cost of running the service.

- Lots of people were worried about the Grange. Closure of the library seemed like first step to it the being closed. At a meeting with the campaign group Councillor Robbins had not provided any reassurance about this point.
- It would be interesting to know how much BHCC spent in Rottingdean given that recycling collection were frequently missed and their refusal to pay for repair of the pavements and roads. If the Library was transferred to the Parish Council, there should be a cut in Council tax.
- To keep the Library open an income could be created by putting on events for choirs, artists, authors and educational groups; whilst the space is not used as a library.
- Could the library be relocated for example in the Chapel and Pavillion. These could be used as places to learn for children and people for the future,
- Book Groups are a key of the library and have recently expanded. People get together to read and discuss and this would be lost with closure.
- Rottingdean, it's an anomaly, in that it is the only Parish Council in Brighton and Hove with a less sophisticated structure, if it took on the library structure, they would be costs for books/computers. In this case there should be reduction in the Council tax and that could be put towards the precept.
- A resident made the point that in the forthcoming devolution proposals perhaps Rottingdean Parish could align itself with East Sussex rather Brighton and Hove

#### Future use of the Chapel

- One person said he had attended the opening of the Chapel and said he was moved by the photograph of former St Aubyns pupils who had fallen in two world wars. He asked if this display could be expanded to include photographs of all local residents who lost their lives in the war and events occurring in the Brighton and Hove area.

#### **Cllr Nixon** made the following points in response

- This was the first meeting of the Councillors following the announcement of the consultation.
- The aim of this discussion would be to find a way to retain the Library. There were areas where more information was needed on the case for closure and the impact analysis where for example the proximity of schools had not been mentioned. This would enable the Council to consider its formal response.
- Nothing had been ruled out, but it was important to bear in mind that the cost of running the library would amount to 40% of the precept income and given the current Council structure it was important to be realistic about what the Council could undertake.
- Usage figures for Rottingdean library were relatively high and much higher if analysed on a per capita basis.
- BHCC has approached the Parish Council in February about the appetite for discussions on the transfer of community assets. At the March Council meeting

Councillors had agreed this should be explored but the initial approach had not been followed up by BHCC.

- The use of the Chapel and Pavilion had yet to be determined and there were limitations given that lack of toilets facilities in the buildings. The Council's approach was to offer limited opening for exhibitions, much like the windmill, and gauge demand before committing funds for development
- The devolution proposals had not yet been discussed with BHCC nor planned to be considered by the Parish Council but the point about alignment would be noted.

## 1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Cllr Poole, Cllr Snow

## 2. **Declarations of interests**

None

Before commencing the formal business of the Council, **Cllr Nixon** wanted to publicly recognise the hard work of the Village Fair organisers in arranging and managing a very successful Village Fair on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August. This was supported by all Councillors.

The Chair also proposed that the Council discussion on the community library review should be brought forward in the agenda to after Matters Arising to enable people who needed to leave early to be present. This was agreed by Councillors

## 3. **Agreement of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> of July.**

- i. The minutes were agreed with an amendment to add an action for Cllr Hickin concerning the missing grill on the bin outside Kipling Gardens. That had now been resolved

## 4. **Action Log.** The Clerk took the meeting through the outstanding actions:

- i. 0210. **Cllr Evans** to follow up the Friends of Beacon Hill (FoBH) notice board proposal. **Cllr Evans** said he had now developed a proposal with the Friends of Beacon Hill to replace all but one of the notice boards with a more robust and easier to maintain design. The information on the remaining board on Hogg Plat would be updated. A quote for £3000 had been obtained for the work. He proposed a joint project with FoBH with RPC project funds allocated for this purpose used to purchase the boards and FoBH organising the installation and future maintenance. This was seconded by Cllr Levins and agreed by unanimous vote. Closed

- ii. 0405. **Cllrs Levins and Hicken** to research funding options for the High Street project and report back to the Council. The Clerk advised that some initial research work had been undertaken by Cllr Levins which he would now take forward to match potential funders with Council funding priorities, Carried Forward.
- iii. 0107 **Cllr Lawrence** to pass on details of a reported parking issue in Upper Rottingdean to Cllr Evans to investigate. Cllr Evans advised he had not yet acted on this. Carried Forward
- iv. 0207 **The Clerk** to circulate the projects log ahead of the next meeting. The Clerk advised that this had been postponed to the September meeting due to other pressing business. Carried Forward
- v. 0307. **Cllr Hickin** to publish in the public domain useful contact numbers relating to traffic issues in the village. **Cllr Hickin** reported that the information had now been posted on social media on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July and was available on the Parish Council website. Closed
- vi. 0407. **Cllr Cherrie** to investigate the placement of 'No Ball Games' signage in the car park near the Chapel. **Cllr Cherrie** said he had reported the matter BHCC and awaited a response. Carried Forward.
- vii. 0507. **Cllr Nixon** to formally invite Trevor Muten (Cabinet Member Transport and City Infrastructure) and Jacob Taylor (Deputy Leader and Cabinet member finance and City Regeneration) accompanied by our Ward Councillors to visit the village to present to them the traffic challenges present in the village. **Cllr Nixon** said this was to be postponed following recent developments in discussions with BHCC engineers on the High Street upgrading work with. Carried Forward.
- viii. 0607. **Cllr Evans** to ask Rottingdean Heritage whether they could put the obsolete business directory sign in West Street Car Park to good use. **Cllr Evans** advised the meeting that he had approached Rottingdean Heritage but as they already had a notice board in the car park, they had no use for the sign. Cllr Evans was therefore to consider removal of the sign. Carried Forward

## 5. **Matters Arising.**

None

- 6. **Community Library Review.** In opening this discussion Cllr Nixon advised the meeting that the Strategy and Communication Advisory Group (SCAG) had discussed the proposed closure of Rottingdean Library. The group proposed that the Council approach the subject by considering three key questions. How best to

ensure residents views were heard; the robustness of the case for closure; and how the Parish Council could support the community in considering alternative models for running a library. This structure was agreed.

i. How best to ensure the voice of residents is heard. **Cllr Lawrence** said this would done by:

- Encouraging residents to respond to the consultation via the Your Voice Portal or by completing the consultation forms held in the Library
- Conveying the views of residents to the BHCC, CEO at the next 6 monthly meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August and in a proposed meeting with the Head of the Library service on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August
- Clarifying and publicising the arrangement for the drop session organised by BHCC for the 9<sup>th</sup> of September
- Exploring the possibility of an RPC facilitated discussion with relevant BHCC Councillors and Officers in the Village Hall.
- Incorporating points made by resident into the Parish Council's formal response to the proposal.

This approach was agreed by Councillors. **Cllr Evans** said that the campaign group might consider contacting other areas facing potential closure to present a united front. He also said the damage to communities from closure was disproportionate to the very modest savings that would be realised.

ii. How robust is the process and justification

- By way of background the Clerk said that every council in England had a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service but had the freedom to design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs. However, any changes should be made in consultation with their communities, and a range of options should be considered supported by rigorous analysis of the impact of changes.
- RPC had received some information from BHCC about the process followed, including what options had been considered, but further questions remained about the sequence and nature of the decision making process and the degree to which the full range of options had been presented to the Cabinet.
- RPC had also received some high level information about the savings from closure but needed a full breakdown to understand the financial case.
- From the papers seen it was not clear the impact on protected groups was as comprehensive as it should be or that the proposed mitigation was adequate. The proximity of two nurseries and two schools to the library had not been mentioned and the practical realities of groups primary school children groups and older residents traveling to nearby neighbouring libraries had not been fully explained.

- Overall, on the information received so far, the SCAG were not confident that the BHCC Cabinet had been presented with all the information they needed to make a considered decision. Councillors agreed that all these points should be explored in further meetings and brought out in the Parish Council's formal response.

iii. Supporting requests from the community for support in developing alternative models. **Cllr Lawrence** made the following points.

- The Parish Council was laser focused on keeping the library open. However, RPC would be open to support the community groups to explore alternative models to keep a library service open in Rottingdean.
- BHCC were encouraging affected community groups to explore alternative community led library models outside the BHCC network. Cllr Lawrence and the Village Community Advisory Group would be available to help and liaise with BHCC to explore alternative solutions as needed.
- RPC will continue to share information provided to date with the Campaign Group and will support any community group who may wish to explore alternative models.

Councillors agreed that this should form the basis of the Parish Council's approach to the consultation and would help structure the Parish Council's formal response. **Cllr Nixon** said the aim would be to produce a draft response to be presented to the September Council meeting for discussion

**Action.** **The Clerk** to draft a Parish Council response to the consultation for discussion at the next meeting of SCAG prior to presentation at the September Council meeting.

## 7. Finance Update

VAT		
HMRC July	£820.65	
C Hayes Salary July	£962.93	
Room Hire	£10	
Affordable Waste (DD)	£158.92	
Cllr Lawrence (St Aubyns opening day expenses)	£81.14	£14.64

Cllr Snow (St Aubyns opening day expenses)	£100.00	
Sam Cocks (Field Maintenance)	£450.00	£90.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2583.64</b>	

i. **Payments and invoices.** The Clerk sought authorisation for the following

ii.

Payments were proposed by Cllr Levins, seconded by Cllr Cherrie and agreed by unanimous vote

ii **July 2025 Accounts.** The Clerk advised that the accounts had been circulate and asked Councillors to note that during July the following invoices had become due that were authorised as per paragraph 5.15 of the Financial Regulations and due to the amount by all Councillors for payment c below.

- a) Gary Steel £200 for bin Emptying
- b) Twiddles Grant £965
- c) RWL Building £3268.80 for the pond barrier repair

iii **Bank balances** The Clerk advised Councillors that bank balances at the end of July were.

Unity Trust Bank Current Account	£108.26
Unity Trust Bank Instant Access	£207,492.5
C&C savings account	£87,233.41
<b>Cash at Bank</b>	<b>£294,834.17</b>

The Clerk reminded Councillors that just under half the balance constituted the first instalment of the developer contribution for the future maintenance of St Aubyns.

## Major Projects

8. **St Aubyns** Cllr Nixon provided the following update:

- Following the transfer of the assets to RPC there were a number of outstanding points to be followed up by the Working Group and Advisory Groups in the coming months:
- The Natural Environment Advisory Group (NEAG) were monitoring the development of the wildflower bed and tree maintenance including the 4 Sorbus trees along Vaughan Williams footpath. They would also agree with Fairfax a date in Autumn for a review of grass coverage in the 4 designated risk areas and the need for the Heras fencing at the Steyning/Newlands Rd entrance. **Cllr Evans** proposed that one of the existing waste bins fitted with a concrete base positioned near the entrance could solve the problem. The existing wooden fence could also be closed up a little. This was agreed. **Cllr Evans** then proposed the concrete bases were obtained for all three bins at a cost of £35 each plus VAT for all bins. This was agreed.

**Action.** The Clerk to purchase three concrete bases for the bins in St Aubyns Field.

- The Built Environment Group were awaiting planning approval to install a letterbox, polycarbonate protection for the stained glass windows and a security alarm in the Chapel. They would then determine appropriate levels of security for the Chapel and Pavilion and develop a maintenance plan and contract.
- A maintenance/care plan was also needed for the sweeps and the QR code that was intended to link the Rottingdean Heritage trail needed attention.
- **Cllr Nixon** proposed to step down from Chairing the St Aubyns working group now that it had moved in to an operation role. Cllr Evans had agreed to take over. The group would review its composition and define its scope at a kick off meeting to be arranged in August. This was agreed

**Action.** The Clerk to organise a meeting during August of the St Aubyns working group.

9. **High Street.** **Cllr Lowery** provided the following update.

- There were two elements to the High Street project: the structure of the pavement and road condition and the general issue of through traffic. Considerable progress had been made in both these aspects.
- A BHCC funded a traffic management study to look at options for better manage the type and volume of High Street traffic with Parish Council input had commenced and a report was expected in November.
- There had been a number of meetings with BHCC engineers discussing an option for a competing resurfacing of the road surface a repair of all the paved areas but the cost of this was prohibitive.
- A further option had therefore been proposed at a meeting with BHCC senior engineers on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July. This would involve an upgrade of the road surface with all potholes repaired and the road resurfaced, similar to that in Flamer Road, that would last for 20 to 30 years. In addition, the pavement on the east side would be upgraded with the damaged and older type brick paving replaced a



friction surfaced bricks and granite kerbing provided to separate the road and pavement as was already the case on the west side.

- The cost was estimated at £200,000, without a contingency, with £120,000 available from the St Aubyns section 106 infrastructure developer contribution.
- The aim was to agree to share the remainder of the costs with BHCC. If this was agreed, BHCC would proceed to confirm cost with their framework contractors aiming to have the work completed in the first quarter of 2026.
- The Next steps to be discussed at the SCAG meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August and a proposal to be made to Councillors at the September meeting.

## Planning

10. **Applications Received in July.** The Clerk reported that the no planning application had been received and a decision on the application for protective sheeting on the Chapel was still awaited.

## Advisory Group Meeting Updates

### 11. Strategy and Communications

- i. Village Survey. The Clerk had circulated a draft publication summarising the result dos the Village Survey with a link to the full report. This was approved.
- ii. Meeting with BHCC CEO. **Cllr Nixon** said the items to be discussed were the community Library review, the High Street and revised BHCC/RPC partnership agreement. He confirmed to Cllr Lawrence that he would also chase up the repair of Kipling Gardens Wall.

12. **Village and Community.** **Cllr Lawrence** proposed to write to the Village Fair organisers on behalf of the Parish Council thanking them for their work in organising the Village Fir on the 2 of August. This was agreed.

13. **Natural Environment.** **Cllr Evans** said the new Beacon Hub team had now formed, and he would obtain contact details and ascertain who would represent the group at the Beacon Hill Stewardship Group. **Cllr Evans** also said as it was now six months since the planting of the trees in St Aubyns field, he wanted to arrange a review of the trees with BHCC and Brighton Permaculture Trust

14. **Built Environment.** **Cllr Cherrie** commented on the good work in repairing the pond fence and said that damaged barrier at the junction of the High Street and A259 had now been repaired

**The meeting closed at 21:43. The next meeting is on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September.**

***Chris Hayes, Parish Clerk***

***August 2025***