



## Minutes of the Meeting of Rottingdean Parish on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2025 at the Whiteway Centre

Present: Cllr Nixon (Chair), Cllr Lawrence, Cllr Evans, Cllr Levins, Cllr Lowery, Cllr Poole, Cllr Snow, Cllr Cherrie.

Public; Ward Cllr Earthy, Nicky Lloyd-Owen

Public Questions.

**Ward Councillor Earthy** provided the following update.

- He is currently engaged in following up complaints about poor bin collection in blocks of flats including St Margarets and an issue with communal bins in St Aubyns Mead
- He has circulated a paper about what funding would be needed to pay for the continuation of a library service in Rottingdean over two years up until a new administration in 2027 when the position on the funding of libraries could change under a new administration following the elections.

**Cllr Nixon** said Ward Cllr Fishleigh had asked that he inform the meeting that the 5G Mast needed to be removed from its temporary site in the long stay car park by October. Following the loss of their appeal to place the mast on St Margarets Flats the provider was now looking for an alternative temporary site that could be in the car park at Beacon Hill Hub.

The Clerk then read out written a statement and questions sent in by a resident, **Bernard Turnbull**

- Rottingdean Arts (RA) had finished the last of the series of 6 Terraces Concerts on Sunday. The weather was poor for a couple of the concerts, indifferent for two and really good for two. Nevertheless, the attendance was estimated to be nearly 2000.

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This year RA gave prominence to Sussex artists. The six collections plus the Parish grant came to £100 more than the money we paid to artists and for publicity. Without the grant RA would not have been able to stage such a popular line up and break even and they wanted to express their thanks to the Parish Council. One note of concern. At one concert a lady in a mobile wheelchair drove off the flat Terrace onto the slope and toppled over down the slope injuring herself. Fortunately, an A and E Doctor was on hand.

- He wanted to report a strong and persistent smell of sewage during the whole of August at the south entrance to Kipling Gardens
- He had noticed that the street light in the High Street above the barbers has been missing for some time, and the light was out further up the High Street. The impact was that there was no street lighting from the Black Horse to the café beyond Field House.
- He wanted to draw Councillors' attention to the fine work being done by Friends of Rottingdean Coastal Environment (FORCE) that had secured clean water bathing status and remained very active with a view to gaining blue flag accreditation. Issues such as pollution from dredging, notices and behaviour on the undercliff were also being discussed. Of particular note was that they wanted to publicise good conditions not just bad and thus encourage people to swim in Rottingdean.

**Cllr Lawrence** said she had not smelt sewage at Kipling Gardens but was aware that the Gardener's toilet had recently been worked and would raise the issue with him. **Cllr Cherrie** said he already raised the issue of the High Street lighting with BHCC.

**Cllr Nixon** said wanted to put in record the Parish Council's appreciation of the success of the summer concerts organised by Rottingdean Arts and in particular their focus on local performers

#### 1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Ward Councillor Fishleigh and Cllr Hickin. **Cllr Nixon** said that because of changed family circumstances Cllr Hickin had now stepped down from the Council. **Cllr Nixon** said he wanted to record the Council's thanks to Cllr Hickin for her contribution in particular her enthusiasm in quickly getting to grips with the work of the Council and for her work on improving Parish Council communication with residents where she had started to make real improvements,

#### 2. **Declarations of interests**

None

- #### 3. **Agreement of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> of August.**
- The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting

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4. **Matters Arising.**

None

5. **Action Log.** The Clerk provided the following update:

- i. 04/05. **Cllrs Levins and Hicken** to research funding options for the High Street project and report back to the Council. Carried Forward
- ii. 01/07. **Cllr Lawrence** to pass on details of a reported parking issue in Upper Rottingdean to Cllr Evans to investigate. **Cllr Lawrence** said she and Cllr Cherrie were to meet the resident who had raised the matter on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September and would then consider what action might be appropriate. Carried Forward.
- iii. 02/07. **The Clerk** to circulate the projects log ahead of the next meeting. Completed. Closed.
- iv. 04/07. **Cllr Cherrie** to investigate the placement of a 'No Ball Games' sign in the car park near the Chapel. **Cllr Cherrie** said he had not had any further reports of ball games being played in the car park and as Field was now open, he suggested the situation be monitored for the moment. Closed
- v. 05/07. **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 as RPC were now close to agreeing a way forward on the High Street upgrade with BHCC the meeting was no longer considered necessary. Closed
- vi. 06/07. **Cllr Evans** to ask Rottingdean Heritage whether they could put the to good use. **Cllr Evans** suggested that as Rottingdean Heritage had no use for the sign perhaps all Councillors could consider alternative uses and come back with any suggestions to the next meeting. Action All
- vii. 01/08. **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. On the agenda. Closed
- viii. 02/08. The **Clerk** to purchase three concrete bases for the bins in St Aubyns Field. The Clerk advised that the bin bases were on order. Closed

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- ix. 03/08. **The Clerk** to organise a meeting during August of the St Aubyns working group. The Clerk advised that he would be canvassing availability for a meeting during w/c the 29<sup>th</sup> of September. Closed.

## 6. Finance Update

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

		VAT
HMRC August	£795.48	
C Hayes Salary August	£936.18	
Room Hire	£22.00	
Affordable Waste (DD)	£116.92	
Cllr Lawrence (Grill and fittings for bin on the Green)	£24.98	£5.00
PKF Littlejohn (Audit)	£315.00	£63.00
Sam Cocks (Field Maintenance)	£600.00	£120
Broxap (Bin base x 3)	£214.00	£42.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3024.56</b>	

Authorisation was proposed by **Cllr Lowery**, seconded by **Cllr Evans**, and agreed by unanimous vote.

- ii. **Bank balances.** **The Clerk** advised that the cash at the bank at the end of August totalled £294,456.88. He reminded Councillors that nearly half of this was the first tranche of the developer contribution for future St Aubyns maintenance costs. **Cllr Levins** suggested that for future meetings it would be helpful to show the maintenance sum separately.
- iii. **August 2025 Accounts.** The Clerk presented the accounts for September that had been circulated noting that a payment of £2092.63 had been received from HMRC in respect of reclaimed VAT. The accounts were agreed.
- iv. **Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2024/25.** The Clerk advised that AGAR had now been cleared by the Auditor. No notes were made on the governance arrangements or accounts although it was pointed out that assets purchased during the prior years should have been included in Section 2, Box 9 in the comparative year column.

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## 7. Major Projects

i. **St Aubyns. Cllr Evans** provided the following update:

- St Aubyns was entering a new phase following the successful completion of the transfer and it had been agreed that he would be taking over the Chair of the group from Cllr Nixon
- An immediate action would be to pull together a management and maintenance schedule set against medium and long term aspirations for the Field and buildings. This would include a mechanism to measure and assess RPC's performance in managing the asset.
- Pressing issues included the placing a bin at the Newlands/Steyping Road entrance to prevent unauthorised vehicle entry once the concrete bases had been received. The Heras fencing could then be removed.
- **Cllr Evans** also said he would speak to the Field maintenance contractor and the BHCC team responsible for watering the trees to ensure they exercise caution when bringing vehicles on to the Field.
- The Working Group would also consider how to begin involving residents in helping to maintain and develop the Field. **Cllr Evans** said had been informed by a local resident that everyone very much appreciated the Field and the way it was being maintained, and some residents had been watering the trees. He said this was something to build on in developing community engagement. The resident had also asked for additional benches that would be considered.
- Forming the Stewardship group would also be an issue for early consideration.

**Cllr Nixon** said it would be important for the group to look at the cost efficiency of, for example, the bin emptying arrangements, but noted that overall maintenance costs were well within the original running cost estimates.

**Cllr Lawrence** said it would be good to set up a tree day for the volunteer tree guardians with Brighton Permaculture Trust

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

- The High Street was currently number 105 on BHCC's repair schedule and as BHCC only had funding in 2026/27 for thirty-five repairs it could be two years before any action.
- A number of very positive meetings had been had with BHCC engineers who had come up with a number of proposals ranging from a fundamental resurfacing of the road and full upgrading of the pavement at cost of

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around £500,000 to a range of more modest options some of which would not provide the required upgrade of the road and pavement.

- However, the most recent option provided a way forward. This would include new granite kerbing on the east side of the High Street from the A259 to Vicarage Lane, new more abrasive surfaced bricks on the on both sides and a 40 mm deep new surface for the roadway that would last for 20 to 30 years. This would raise the pavement height above the road surface.
- This cost ranged from £260,000 to £216,000 depending on the level of contingency and minor scope options included and could be part funded by Section 106 infrastructure developer contribution of £120,000 with BHCC and RPC sharing the remainder of the costs.
- BHCC had also funded a Traffic Management Study (TMS) to look at options for better managing traffic flow that was to report in November.
- Following the TMS, work could begin on refining the design, which could include some speed control measures such as raising the zebra crossing, and finalising costs. BHCC would then consult their framework contractors about how the work might be completed.
- BHCC said work could begin in Q1 next year although it was more a likely to be Q3 or Q4. There would also be a need to consult with local residents and business.
- It was worth bearing in mind that it was likely that costs could increase once initial investigations were done on the current surface and the practicalities of undertaking the work were developed. However, this presented a way of achieving a significant upgrade outside the normal BHCC repair schedule and under the control of RPC.

## 8. Planning

- i. **Applications Received in August.** None

## 9. Advisory Group Meeting Updates

- i. Strategy and Communications.

- a) Meeting with Jess Gibbons, CEO, BHCC **Cllr Nixon** gave the following update.

- **The Library.** This was a good opportunity to share residents disappointment and deep concern about the proposed closure of Rottingdean library. We explained the Parish Council's approach to ensure that the voice of residents was clearly heard, we had important questions about the justification and process that needed to be answered, and we would actively support community groups should they wish to explore alternative models. We said that RPC would develop a response to the proposals, in an open and transparent way. The response would reflect the

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voice of residents and address any remaining concerns we had regarding process and justification following clarification with BHCC. We clarified the support we needed from her team to allow us to develop this response, and she was very supportive of their role in providing this.

- **The High St.** The CEO was very pleased that we had a workable solution for the High St and a future costed plan for the Lower High St and to present to Parish Councillors. We shared our appreciation of the support that had been given by Andy Westwood and Theo in preparing this.
- **The Grange.** Chris and I explained the current confusion regarding the impact of the library proposal and the future of the Grange. She was surprised that there had been no follow up regarding the potential for community asset transfers including the Grange. However, she said that the Estates team were in the middle of a review of all BHCC assets so it may have got lost in this process. She agreed to clarify the position as soon as possible. **Cllr Nixon** said we had since received an approach from the estates team for an exploratory discussion to discuss at the next SCAG meeting prior to Council consideration. Councillors agreed that this would be helpful.
- **Partnership Agreement.** The Partnership agreement was agreed in principle, but we agreed to add a reference to the need for future alignment with the Devolution Bill section about Neighbourhood governance arrangements.
- **Kipling Gardens Wall.** Jess said that this was still in the hands of the Parks and Gardens team, who were in discussion with the police and developing a cost for repair.

b) Community Library Review. **Cllr Lawrence** fed back discussion at recent meeting

- Meeting with Ceris Howard and Cllr Alan Robbins. Cllr Lawrence, Cllr Nixon and the Clerk had explained RPC's approach to the consultation that was to ensure both the individual and collective voice of residents was heard. The community response and strength of feeling to the proposed closure was explained in some detail and we agreed to share the points raised by residents at the RPC meeting on the 4th of August to include in their consultation report.
- We asked questions about the process used and the justification and said we would reflect on these responses and discuss how they should be used in the draft response to be discussed on the 1st of September.
- We made it clear that RPC had not got the competence nor the finances to run or operate the library and to our knowledge the Campaign group did not wish to pursue this option at present

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- Cllr Lawrence had also met with the Campaign group and discussed the issue of a community run library. The group were very clear that their clear focus was to maintain the library as it was.
- It was agreed with BHCC that the concerns about the proposed library closure raised by residents and recorded at the August 4<sup>th</sup> RPC meeting would be shared with the libraries team and included in the consultation feedback.
- BHCC ( Ceris Howard and Cllr Robbins) agreed to attend a village meeting regarding the proposed library closure at 18:30 on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September just before the RPC meeting if the Campaign Group would support the need for this. Subsequently the Campaign Group preferred to focus on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September drop in session and would review the need for any further meeting after this.

The Clerk then took the meeting thought the key points that SCAG had agreed could form the basis of the RPC

- Process. The consultation was predicated on a decision made to close at least three on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2025 prior to any impact analysis started. Not evident that other more strategic alternatives that could maintain the entire network and achieve desired savings had been put to Councillors. For example, reducing hours more widely across the network to enable some opening of all libraries, the use of voluntary staffing or partnering with social enterprises, charities or trusts to deliver the library service like the arrangements with RNLI to maintain a comprehensive lifeguard service.
- Financial and Policy Case for closure. The financial case for closure was misleading. The rationale for closure stated that Rottingdean Library was the most proportionately expensive to run as it was located in a Grade II listed building – but the building itself was not to be closed and therefore any maintenance savings for one room would be marginal. The proposal was to close one of the most used libraries in the network where membership and usage were high (29,000 visits per year) and very high per head of population with membership of 1609 from a population of 3176. The savings to be realised represented a small proportion of the £215,000 total savings but would represent a significant loss to Rottingdean of a community hub that had been at the centre of the Village for over 70 years.
- Impact Assessment and Mitigation The initial Equality Impact Assessment did not adequately describe the impact on protected groups. Thirty-two percent of Rottingdean residents were over 65 with the majority of this group over 70 and nearly half of the over 70's group are over 80. A journey from Rottingdean to Saltdean would require a bus journey that would mean crossing a major highway, twice, and to Woodingdean would require two bus journeys. This would significantly and disproportionately affect the ability of older people and those with mobility issues to access library services. The was no mention in the impact analysis of the proximity of 4 schools including

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two primary schools and of two nurseries that were within 400 meters of the library and that made extensive use of the library facilities. Closure could deprive young children of access to books.

- Public reaction. 3500 people had signed a petition against closure. The Library represented a place where young people are encouraged to spark their imagination by reading and where the elderly meet to enjoy reading clubs and more importantly have a safe quiet place where they can interact with others.
- BHCC For these reasons the Parish Council would request that Councillors consider carefully the responses to the consultation, the process undertaken and look again at the case for closing any libraries and particularly Rottingdean Library

The following points were made in discussion:

- It would be useful if RPC could suggest some alternative ways of achieving the savings without closure such as reducing staffed hours across the network.
- A key argument is the failing in the process as set out in DCMS guidance. BHCC had moved straight to closures with any impact analysis or consideration of strategic alternatives
- Removing key infrastructure like the library would make Rottingdean a much less attractive place to live.
- Rottingdean's population had recently increased by around 500 people including the provision of social housing that had changed the Village socio-economic mix.
- The extent to which the library represented a long established community hub was clearly not understood by BHCC.
- The importance of the impact on the elderly and the young cannot be overemphasised in the RPC response.

It was agreed that the Clerk should draft a formal RPC response based on proposed structure and points made in discussion for circulation and agreement by Councillors.

- c) English Devolution The Clerk took the meeting through the paper circulated that set out the 4 options for a new unitary authority that BHCC were now consulting on. Each proposed expansion to the east to bring the population to over the 300,000 – the minimum level set out by the Ministry of Communities and Local Government. The Clerk said that all of the options would have only an indirect and minor impact on Rottingdean in that it would bring more lower tiers of Government within a new Brighton and Hove unitary authority. He said Councillors might have individual preferences, but at face value there would not seem to be any option that would have a greater impact on the Parish Council over another. The Clerk asked

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Councillors to consider if there was a need/desire for a Parish Council response to this further, more detailed, consultation. **In discussion it was agreed while Councillors may wish to respond as individuals but that a Parish Council response was not necessary**

- d) Workplan 2025/26. The Clerk took the meeting though the workplan update noting that many projects and tasks had been completed with others in progress or awaiting action by others. The Clerk said that as some projects and activities had been brought in below budget there remained a £50,000 unallocated reserve. **Cllr Nixon** pointed out that RPC had already earmarked £40,000 for the High Street project and the reserve put the Parish Council in a good position move forward on the proposed upgrade.

10. **Village and Community**. No further update

11. **Natural Environment**. No further update Preparation was needed for the Beacon Hub Stewardship AGM in October including the preparation of the Draft Annual report.

12. **Built Environment**. No further update than the note circulated

**The meeting closed at 21.35. The next meeting is on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October**

***Chris Hayes, Parish Clerk***

***August 2025***

Signed

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