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**Rottingdean Parish Council**

**Annual Village Newsletter**

**Invitation to the ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING Monday 19th May 2025 6.30 pm in the Main Hall at the Whiteway Centre**

 **Chair’s Address**

Your Parish Council (RPC) started 2024 with 6 Councillors and has, during the course of the year, welcomed three new co-opted Councillors, Pat Lowery, Sarah-Helen Snow and most recently Sandra Hickin.

We have finally reached the full complement of 9 Councillors with a rich diversity of experience from Business Management, Project management, Transport, Healthcare, Compliance, the Voluntary Sector, Law Enforcement and Planning.

We have also launched a **Village Survey** seeking your views about the work of the Parish Council and your priorities for the Village. See our website and have your say!

I have captured some highlights below from our three areas of focus but please read on for more details from the Advisory Group Leads.

**Preserving and protecting the natural environment, green spaces and character of our village**

The Parish Council is a Statutory Consultee for all planning applications submitted within the boundary of the Parish. With the Neighbourhood Plan now in place our Planning Consultative Group and the Council have been carefully assessing proposals to support development for those that comply with the Plan while objecting, with clear reasoning, for those that do not. We met with the BHCC Planning department and Planning Committee Chair in February to ensure that RPC views are given appropriate weight during Committee discussions. ***Cllr Poole will give more details later.***

**Promoting and enhancing the quality of village community life, services and amenities**

Sadly, the Rottingdean Pharmacy closed during the year and the building is still up for sale. Cllr Lowery has been exploring the possibilities of attracting providers to the Village but without success to date.

We will be closely monitoring the review of Community libraries and in particular the response of residents and community groups during the consultation phase. Depending on residents’ views, we will make representations to BHCC before decisions are made.

On a very positive note, Rottingdean will finally receive 3.5 acres of public open community space in the centre of the village in Spring of this year. The acquisition of the St Aubyns Community Field, former Chapel and Pavilion is a very significant and rare event. Although the transfer was due in October 2024, the very wet weather over the summer period delayed seeding and it was clear that the Field would not meet the required Specification before the Winter set in. The final transfer is now on track for completion at the end of May 2025 when the grass should be well established. ***Cllrs Cherrie and Evans will explain more about the preparations being made and what to expect when it opens to the public.***

As in previous years the Parish Council has also supported the hard work of the many Community Groups who ensure that the Village continues to thrive. ***More from Cllr Lawrence later.***

**Monitoring and influencing the development of the built environment, highways, and pathways**

BHCC and many other Local Councils continue to have limited resources leading to tough choices when it comes to services. Rottingdean Parish Councillors work closely with BHCC officers and Ward Councillors to ensure that the needs of the village are heard. In July 2025 we started to have 6 monthly meetings with BHCC CEO to discuss important and unresolved issues and have recently agreed a joint Working Group to develop an integrated plan to address the High St condition, traffic flow and pedestrian safety. The brief for this can be found on our website. We understand and share the frustration residents have with the condition of pavements and potholes around the village and encourage you to inform us but also use the BHCC reporting portal wherever possible. ***Cllr Cherrie will say more about this later.***

You can find our **Infrastructure Development Plan for 2025/6** on the RPC website for more detail about our plans.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Councillors for their essential contributions to our work, their commitment and enthusiasm. These attributes will be even more important as we take over the operation and maintenance of the St Aubyns assets later in the year bringing new challenges and opportunities. I must also emphasise the crucial role and contribution of Chris Hayes, our Parish Clerk, as the only paid official of the Council, and on whom we heavily depend.

Finally, a big thank you to those who have actively assisted the Parish Council throughout the year. I would like to mention Sue John, Mike Bennett and Bernard Turnbull for supporting the St Aubyns Working Group, Clive Dixon for his support with the Village Welcome pack and many people who have supported our work throughout the year.

**Planning**

BHCC Planning Department forward a weekly list to the RPC Planning Consultative Group with details of planning applications within the Parish. Although BHCC must seek the Parish Council’s opinion on every application submitted for planning approval, we are not the final decision makers.

The planning group carefully consider online plans and documents and will visit the site if this helps to give a clearer perspective - for instance, to assess potential privacy issues or blocking of light for neighbouring properties. If there are no such issues and the proposed development complies with the requirements of the Rottingdean Neighbourhood Plan, the Planning Department are advised that we have no objections to the application.

If it’s believed there are visual amenity or privacy issues for neighbours, or that the application may impact on the character and key design features of our historic village or be in conflict with any of the other requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan, the planning group will specify an objection on those grounds. Details are circulated to all Councillors and the application may be discussed at the monthly Council meeting if a consensus is needed.

The objection is submitted to BHCC Planning Department and, if it is subsequently overruled by Planning Officers or the Planning Committee, BHCC Planning Department will provide specific feedback on the reasons for granting their approval contrary to our objection.

**Natural Environment**

Thanks to a grant of 36 trees from the Forestry Commission, and the indispensable help of the City Parks Department at BHCC and the Brighton Permaculture Trust, we have been able to plant a small orchard and a protective band of shelter trees at St Aubyn’s Community Field. A keen group of local volunteers turned out in chilly weather over two days in February to help with the planting. Along with the newly planted wildflower meadow on the east side of the field, we hope these trees will provide a haven for insects and birds and thus help fulfil our goal of making the field an asset for both the community and local wildlife. Bat and bird boxes have also been installed in trees on the north side of the field to add to this. The artistic component ’The Sweeps’ is now installed forming a focal point where the mown paths across the Field will meet.

During the year we have continued our support for the Beacon Hill nature reserve, including chairing the stewardship group and helping with the publication of a comprehensive annual report. We are also helping develop a plan to repair and possible upgrade the public information boards around the reserve. We have also been offering backup support to community groups in Rottingdean, Ovingdean and Saltdean who are campaigning with BHCC’s local ward Councillors to improve health and safety conditions along the under cliff, including better control of dogs and improved safety measures for pedestrians and cyclists.

As the Parish Council comes up to full strength we hope to be able to further strengthen our work in helping protect and enhance the natural environment in and around Rottingdean.

**Built Environment**

The Rottingdean Parish Council Built Environment Advisory Group has had a busy year. The group’s focus this year has been to work in collaboration with others to ensure the smooth transition of St Aubyn’s Field into the Parish Council’s stewardship. This has included working to ensure both the pavilion and chapel are left in a suitable condition by the developers that is acceptable to the Council, to install electrical connections and alarms to both buildings, and working to source and supply suitable exterior protection to the stained-glass windows on the chapel.

Councillors decided to cancel the planned paving work at the rear of the pond. Local volunteers had cleared a path all the way round the pond, thus making the entire area much more accessible for all. The path was deemed to be sufficiently stable and therefore, it was decided the money earmarked for this project could be diverted elsewhere. My thanks and those of the entire Council have been conveyed to those who worked on the path.

Work is underway to repair the barrier. At the time of writing, a steel fabricator has visited the site and has a plan to remove the barrier in sections to bring them up to a suitable condition before reinstalling them. Some of the retaining posts will be reseated and the entire structure rustproofed and painted. This remedial work is much cheaper than replacing the entire barrier.

As the St Aubyns work to prepare for handover draws to a close, the BEAG’s attention will be diverted more to both sections of the High Street. This work is dependent on available funding from BHCC. More details will be provided soon.

The daily routine goes on. The condition of the Twitten footpath has been reported to the City Council as has the broken kerb bricks on the High Street. The smashed wall at Kipling Gardens is being dealt with by the City Council and the police.

If you see anything in the village that needs to be reported, please do so by contacting the City Council directly (preferably via their portal for such reports) or to RPC on the usual addresses.

**Village and Community**

Over the course of last year, we have continued to keep a watching eye on monies due to Rottingdean Parish Council from the new housing developments within the Parish boundaries. These include the sum of around £200,000 for sport at Happy Valley, by way of compensation for “loss” of the sports field on the St Aubyns site, and a small sum of money towards the development of the woodland area in Kipling Gardens.

Members of VCAG have become engaged with local initiatives to help residents in the Deans reduced their carbon footprint and three members of the council have been trained as energy champions. We are looking to see how we can start a wider discussion in the village about what can be done in Rottingdean to save energy.

We continue to support local voluntary and community groups from the Parish Council Grants budget. This year grants have included support towards the cost of running a programme for young people in the Deans over the summer months, the free concerts organised by Rottingdean Arts on the terraces, the Village Fair to help with the cost of the events licence and a new organisation FORCE who are monitoring sea water quality at the local beach. We are always happy to consider grant applications from local voluntary groups and charities.

The Christmas Tree was erected on the Village Green with greater ease than in previous years, thanks to the newly installed electrical system.

VCAG were very pleased to welcome Sarah-Helen Snow (new Parish Councillor) as a member. Our next task is organising a fun day for all to celebrate the official opening of St Aubyns Community Field **on Saturday the 28th of June.**

**Finance and Standards**

The Parish Council continues to carefully manage the funding provided by council tax in line with its statutory duty. At the Council meeting on the 3rd of February Councillors agreed a budget of £171,800 for 2025/26 and to increase the amount of the precept for average (Band D) households by 98 pence per year bringing the total annual amount payable to £33.79. This small increase will mitigate inflationary pressures on our operational costs and allow the Parish Council to deliver key improvements to local amenities and services. The Parish Council plans include repair of the pond barrier, making the undercliff safer for both pedestrians and cyclists and improving signage on Beacon Hill. We also want to invest in the St Aubyns Field, Chapel and Pavilion assets for the whole community to enjoy, develop a masterplan for the improvement of the High Street with the City Council and continue to support the excellent work of the many volunteer groups that make the village a special place to live and work.

The budget allocation for 2025/26 is shown below

Please contact us at parish.clerk@rottingdean-pc.gov.uk if you feel something needs our attention.

**Parish Clerk: Chris Hayes**

**Mike Nixon (Chair), Julie Lawrence (Vice Chair), Mark Cherrie, Phil Evans, Kerry Levins, Chris Poole, Sarah-Helen Snow, Patrick Lowery and Sandra Hickin**

**Details of Advisory Group Members are on our website www.rottingdean-pc.gov.uk**