

Parish Assembly Chair Report 2024

1) This report is the first for your new Council elected in June 2023. It is worthy to note that not only was there an election, (one of only 10% of Rother Parishes having one) but also that 60% of the Councillors were new. I believe these outcomes are positive indicators of a Parish community that is strong and developing in the second smallest Parish in the district

2) A further indication of this is the inception of Whatlington Connectors during the year, actively promoting community development and engagement within the Parish. This is in addition to The Village Hall Committee, who continue to successfully raise funds for this community asset and the well read and presented Village news and band of deliverers that keeps us all in touch, plus Community Speedwatch volunteers helping keep us safe. My thanks to all these community stalwarts for their commitment to the civic well being. A strong community is a healthy community.

3) Another unique event in the year was the hosting a meeting with our MP. Unique in the fact that this was the first time that a member of the Government had come to the Parish (Huw Merriman being the Minister for Rail in the Dept of Transport) The meeting was, as expected, dominated by issues about the A21,

4) As ever the A21 also predominated Parish concerns during the year. There is a £26m road safety improvement scheme in place for the A21 and Whatlingtons position in the plans, to reflect a fair disposition of funding, has to be actively protected. There was one public meeting with Highways followed by a Councillor only online video call with a further public meeting promised - not yet delivered but hopefully in May. Like most Parish issues with local and central government we always travel hopefully but expect long journeys for delivery.!

5) With regard to other Council business it was a normal year for planning considerations with 15 being submitted for comment. A notable application, still in process, was a change of use of Leeford Hotel becoming a boarding house for Battle Abbey school It is hoped that if this proceeds there will be some civic gains for the Parish.

6) On finance, after 5+ years of no increase, the Council decided that it was necessary to raise the Parish Precept by 5%. A decision not taken lightly but essential if we are to maintain our ability to continue to deliver positive outcomes on Parish matters.

7) In conclusion, my thanks to our District and County representatives and our Parish Clerk for their continuing support during the year.

8) But special thanks to our new Councillors and Vice Chair for stepping up to the challenges of being a Parish Councillor. I trust their first years experience in the role has confirmed them in the belief that serving the community is not only an informative, rewarding and engaging activity but, hopefully, at times, entertaining and fulfilling.

.