

Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC)
Minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2021 at 10.30am
(Virtual Meeting held on Zoom)

Present: David Pankhurst (Peasmarsh) (**RALC Chairman**), Peter Turner (Icklesham) (**RALC Vice Chairman**), John Barnes (Etchingham), Paulette Barton (Etchingham), Christine Burgess (Bodiam), John Bradford (Camber), Gill Colquhoun (RALC Secretary), Claire Cordell (Rother Voluntary Action), Isla Dacey (East Sussex Highways), Ros Day (Crowhurst), Judith Dean (Pett), Tracy Dixon (Beckley), Michael Edwards (Westfield), Bob Franklin (Burwash), Graham Furness (Guestling), Jacqui Harding (Northiam), Amy Head (Peasmarsh), Trevor Leggo (ESALC), Hilary Pankhurst (Peasmarsh), David Penfold (Pett), Graham Peters (Bodiam), Judy Petty (Brightling), Sue Prochak (Rother District Council), Julie Ramus (Rye Foreign), Janet Richardson-Simmons (Rye Foreign), Keith Robertson (Catsfield), Emily Simpson (ESALC), Steve Stewart (Fairlight), Chris Varrall (Sussex Police), Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe), Dale Wheeler (Battle)

1 Welcome.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Trevor Leggo and Emily Simpson from ESALC, and Claire Cordell from Rother Voluntary Action. It was confirmed that the meeting was being recorded on Zoom to aid minute taking, and was **agreed** that the link to the recording would be made available to members.

2 Apologies for absence

Philip Allard (Iden), Lisa Cooper (RDC), Richard Farhall (Rye), Pauline Glew (Sedlescombe), Malcolm Johnston (Rother District Council), Anthony Lloyd (Ticehurst), Wendy Miers (Dallington), Les Nottage (Brede), Karen Ripley (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), Jackie Saul-Hunt (Rother Voluntary Action)

3 Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2021, were **agreed** with one correction Item 9 'Dave Wheeler' to be replaced by 'Dale Wheeler'.

4 Matters arising from previous meeting

- **6 RALC Reps on ESALC board - update from Board members.** Peter Turner (ESALC director) reported that the ESALC board had met on 29th April. A working party had ensured ESALC could function after the disbandment of SSALC. Trevor Leggo continues as Chief Executive 2 days a week supported by Emily Simpson 5 mornings a week. ESALC has circulated a survey asking Parishes what they want ESALC to do. Informal talks are ongoing with West Sussex parishes.
- **8 Wildflower Verges – confirmation of 2 cut trial participants** The Chairman confirmed that 5 of the 12 parishes accepted to take part in the trial across East Sussex were RALC members: Battle, Beckley, Brightling, Burwash and Mountfield which was good news.
- **12 Update on RALC website** The Chairman publicly thanked the Secretary for her work developing the website which had just been launched at www.ralc.org.uk and to Malcolm Johnston and the Rother team for their support. The Secretary demonstrated the website; login details had been circulated to Rother Clerks for onward circulation to all Parish Councillors. Parishes were asked to check if their membership details were correct on the website, and to submit any changes to the Secretary via their Clerk. (Members were asked to update their email contacts for John Barnes from his East Sussex email address to his Rother email cllr.john.barnes@rother.gov.uk as he was standing down as an East Sussex Councillor at the May elections).

5 Finance

- **To receive update as at 30 March 2021** – the update had been previously circulated. There were no questions.
- **To approve auditor for annual audit** - Alison Stevens was **approved** as the auditor for 2020/21 (she had undertaken audits for the previous 2 years). Proposed Hilary Pankhurst.
- **To confirm subscription fee for new Bexhill Town Council** – members **agreed** that Bexhill Town Council (BTC) could join RALC for the fee of £45 per annum (the same as Battle and Rye). Proposed John Barnes.

6 ESALC Update

Trevor Leggo

[This item was taken immediately after Item 2].

Trevor Leggo trevor.leggo@esalc.co.uk introduced Emily Simpson admin@esalc.co.uk as the new ESALC administrator. He reassured members that little has changed for RALC members since the disbandment of SSALC. (A new ESALC website is now at <https://esalc.council.prateraines.co.uk/>) Members were reminded to complete the ESALC training survey circulated to Clerks, results to be reported back to the ESALC board on 29 April. The intention was to focus on priorities identified by members. Emily had also asked Clerks for help updating member details on the ESALC database.

Trevor highlighted that there was a shortage of applicants for Clerk vacancies across East and West Sussex. Councils prefer experienced Clerks but there are not enough; to make posts attractive pay levels have spiraled. It was recognised that there needed to be an opportunity for prospective clerks to undertake training to equip them to apply for vacancies, the question was how to reach those people and who will pay for the training. There were vacancies in 7 of the 9 wards for the new Bexhill Town (Parish) Council and the Clerk position was about to be advertised.

PCC focus group meetings will restart in May and again in November, although not every parish is included there is the opportunity to comment on policing every 6 months. There is a separate forum for policing roads.

Government regulations require councils to return to face to face meetings from 7th May. The Government is not challenging action by Hertfordshire against this decision. ESALC will inform members of the result.

Death of HRH Prince Philip. ESALC had sought legal advice on whether parish meetings could be held during the period of mourning. Advice was that parish meetings could continue on 14 and 15 April with a minute's silence. Further meetings cannot take place until 23 April.

Questions:

Q David Penfold (Pett) asked if Parish meetings should also be cancelled in the period of mourning. A Advice to postpone for a week. Q Is there a relationship between ESALC and Mulberry? A There is a tenuous link.

Q Michael Edwards (Westfield) expressed an opinion that hybrid meetings are the worst type of meeting. What is ESALC promoting? A To hold Annual Council Meeting before 7th May and then don't schedule any further meetings until after 21st June. Government guidance says that the public can access online until 21st June, unlike Councillors who have to be present. Q In the longer term are you promoting the ability to hold online meetings on a permanent basis? A Online meetings are great, hybrid are the worst as they require serious investment in technology and it is difficult for the Clerk to monitor face to face and remote participants.

Q Keith Robertson (Catsfield) Can you build in something for more Councils to have a voice in PCC focus meetings. A We will, trying to go to parishes where there will be issues. Another opportunity is every 6 months when Chairs of District Associations meet with the Chief Constable and PCC. Clerks are invited to forward both strategic items and items not resolved with local inspectors to these meetings.

Q Ros Day (Crowhurst) Should we cancel a meeting on Monday? Yes, the advice is to reschedule, as you cannot issue summons during a period of mourning.

Q David Pankhurst (Peasmarsh) What are the dates when you can hold Parish Assembly for electors? A Between end of March and 1st June but under present circumstances not possible, although unenforceable. The advice is to rearrange in September or another date when safer to hold. If electors still, choose to call and organize a meeting on their own that is a different matter.

Q Peter Turner (Icklesham) Q Should we hold our Parish assembly is this Friday. A Do not hold.

7 Highway Matters

Isla Dacey (East Sussex Highways)

Email isladacey1@eshighways.gov.uk

A report had been circulated with the papers for the meeting, Isla Dacey highlighted key points from her report and invited feedback from members. Highways site meetings are now possible in person, but SLR meetings continue to be held remotely. Interest had been received from a number of councils on installing Black Cat devices. It will only be approved within 30mph limit etc. Location details need to be very specific (more information is available from Isla if needed). Each Parish will need £10M public liability insurance. Dates on published details of upcoming works are subject to change during the year, depending on surveys (the website will be updated). A new member of the Highways Team has been recruited for Area 2 Hastings. A detailed case regarding Highways Services Procurement is going to Cabinet in June. After a new contractor is selected there will be consultation with stakeholders including Parishes.

Questions:

Q Judy Petty (Brightling) Q Judy Petty expressed an opinion that as Black Cat and Community SpeedWatch (CSW) projects are only possible in 30mph limits, it makes it very difficult to do anything about speeding in rural areas. A ID cannot comment on CSW restrictions. It is about safety, so when assessing sites it is about safety and risk assessment. SIDS can go in 30 and 40mph zones.

Q Keith Robertson (Catsfield) Could you include in risk assessment if 40mph is safe? A East Sussex Highways would consider 40mph areas on a case by case basis, but will need detailed risk assessment.

Q Valerie(Beckley). Beckley had only signed up to one grass cut but email from contracts confirmed 2 cuts. A 2 cuts are usually in visibility zones around junctions. David Pankhurst to forward email to Isla so that she can check with Contracts and reply to Valerie.

8 Sussex Police

Inspector Chris Varrall (Rother District)

Email Christopher.Varrall@sussex.pnn.police.uk

Inspector Varrall gave a verbal update. He provided Rother data (which includes Ninfield) between 1st January to 31st March 2021: 140 reports related to antisocial driving, and 37 collision reports. Collisions – 28 were slight, 8 less serious, 1 moderately serious. No serious injury or fatal. 34 antisocial reports reported via 999 / others through internet. St Marks, Bexhill has highest areas of antisocial driving– 16 cases reported; other areas above 10 Sidley (11); Ninfield (10); Battle (11). Collisions – Bexhill (9) far outweighed Battle (3), Hurst Green, Staplecross, Westfield and Whatlington are above 2. Police were looking at projects, and are interested in RALC speeding initiative as it is a community led project. There is a force wide change to PCSO patrol plans (looking at problems in each Parish). Clerks should be contacted by local PCSOs in next 6 weeks. Please contact Inspector Varrall if no contact within that time. The focus of recent policing has been the coastal strip as lockdown eases. A strategic coastal strip meeting has been set up within Rother District to manage issues. Last year there were 40 problem days when an increase in traffic was expected, this year 80 are expected. The £30 daily parking fine is an issue which Police are trying to resolve. Best practice is being shared with other areas. A new DSO engagement officer for Rother District will reach out to Parishes (using social media platforms).

Questions:

Q Keith Robertson (Catsfield). Thank you for your help. What if people don't report speeding? Can we look at a more reliable way of getting statistics on anti-social driving (ASD) to you? A We know antisocial driving is under reported but we are driven by data. KR RALC members need to tell residents to report ASD all the time.

Q Isla Dacey (Highways) Is Operation Crackdown included in Anti-Social Driving? Crackdown data

is not yet included in Police antisocial driving data.

Q Bob Franklin (Burwash) – Thank you for help.

Q John Barnes (Etchingham) Speedwatch data is indicative. It reduces speeds but persistent offenders and Operation Crackdown is a good way to communicate that to Police. The biggest ASD in Etchingham is driving / parking around school time. Can some attention be paid to this?

Q Peter Turner (Icklesham) Would it help if Parishes reported published Police email address?

A Can report on Crackdown page <http://www.operationcrackdown.org/>, or Sussex Police intranet, or here and now 101, or 999. Sussex Police are aware of national initiatives with regards to school parking.

Q Dale Wheeler (Battle). Encouraged by ideas of cameras and fines, so would not need to visit schools.

9 Project Updates

- **Speeding Proposal Update – feedback from meeting with Lisa Bell, Asst. Chief Constable, Sussex Police**

Keith Robertson/David Pankhurst

Keith Robertson keith.a.robertson@aol.co.uk shared 4 slides: see Appendix 1 “Ralc Speeding Project Reduction: Lowering speeds in our towns and villages”. He provided an update on work using Black Cat at Catsfield. Since the last meeting the black cat has been set up 3 times in the parish with similar results each time: 50% of cars speeding each week, 4-6000 cars. Police have agreed set days to attend and enforce over next 6 months which is a great step forward). 1 hour per month has been requested. Also used same data to focus Speed Watch teams. Day 1 (1st week of April) – recorded 35 out of 38 over 30mph. So have concluded that black cat can be used to focus on what we can do, and how Police can help us within a wider package of measures. Still do have hotspots which can take action on. Once assessment and training is in place it is easy to use Black Cat. Initial set up is more complicated. Yet to see if it will make a difference. Conclusion: black cat does work, and Catsfield can use it, but do not yet know how easy it would be to share. (Catsfield is looking to share its black cat box with Icklesham and Peasmarsh over next few months before rollout across Rother Parishes will be considered). Most importantly the Police view is that enforcement alone is not the solution to speeding, but if apply to local priorities where local council is actively engaged (Community Speed Watch and speaking to East Sussex and have Black Cat) you have some chance of enforcement. The next steps for Catsfield are to track its use, and rollout to the 2 other parishes, and talk to East Sussex Highways again about possible changes in Catsfield. Keith wants to use results of black cat in Catsfield and publish speed data in partnership with Police. There is going to be a slightly different approach from Police; individual parishes need to engage.

David Pankhurst concluded that until RALC is ready for wider rollout across Rother. RALC cannot give more information to Parishes. There are issues in terms of how data is presented. Parishes were **asked** to formally register their interest in using black cat by email to Keith Robertson by 31st May, stating whether they are considering purchase of Black cat for own Parish use (cost £2.5K each device) or purchasing with other parishes. A meeting would then be arranged with interested parties. Once numbers are known RALC can talk to the company who supplies Black Cat devices.

Questions:

Q Isla Dacey (Highways) Wealden district are looking at SID devices. Might it be worth some Rother Parishes using Black Cat and others using SID? A Keith Robertson felt both devices might be needed.

Q Inspector Varrall identified Dr Jeremy Leach (Wealden District Council) as a good resource. He liked the concept of using Black Cat and SID together, then removing SID to look at impact. There is no definitive answer. Need to look at data collection and an engineering solution. Police want to help, although it is working outside national fatal collisions policy. The Police look forward to seeing Black Cat results in Rother, it might be helpful to invite Ninfield Parish to RALC meetings.

Q Jonathan Vine-Hall (Sedlescombe) confirmed that Sedlescombe already has Black

Cat device purchased with grant funding. They are willing to share with other Parishes. Q John Barnes (Etchingam) expressed the opinion that speeding is not just about safety, it is about village life (speeding can contribute to social isolation). He would support use of Black Cat devices alongside the SIDs to see if SIDS and / or Black Cats are really effective. SID visibility helps but 4 or 5% of speeders still need reeducation.

David Pankhurst reported that he and Keith Robertson had met with Assistant Chief Constable Lisa Bell who is supportive of RALC's speeding initiative.

10 Rother Matters

Cllr Prochak cllr.susanprochak@rother.gov.uk provided an update on behalf of Rother District Council. Regular updates of Council decisions, with links for further information, have started to be sent to Clerks, she asked that updates are shared with all Parish Councillors. Also members were asked to encourage local businesses, including new businesses to apply for the additional government money made available to support business. The application process for Rother community grants has been revised to make applications easier. (RVA have a grants funding session on 28 April). Small grants of up to 1K are available from Rother throughout the year, larger grants less often. Large grants applications are being received up to 15 July (RVA will support). Local Rother Lottery to start in Autumn. Rother are very happy to support small community events (see Rother website or contact Sue for details). The Rother Planning Conference is to be reinstated in 2021; Parishes were thanked for their contribution to the recent Planning Department review (one message was that communication needs to be better, and Parishes would like to know how they can collaborate with Rother).

Questions:

Q Keith Robertson raised the problem of litter in the no man's land between villages. Is there a way Parishes can work with Rother to link up in dealing with litter in these areas?

A Sue Prochak noted the problem of safety, particularly for volunteers. Rother will take away but there is a schedule of works.

Q Bob Franklin (Burwash) expressed concern at the amount of time dealing with planning applications. A Jonathan Vine-Hall (Chairman of Rother Planning Committee) recognised that this was a problem, compounded by the fact that with Covid Rother can only deal with half the applications they processed previous to the Pandemic. A contract planning service is being employed to support permanent planners. It is hoped this will be in place by the end of May.

11 Campaign for East Sussex to adopt Quiet Lanes Policy

Bob Franklin, Burwash SSALC/ESALC

Burwash Parish's draft Quiet Lanes Policy had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. Bob Franklin provided the background: it is increasingly difficult for people to walk, run or cycle lanes safely. Existing speed limits of 60mph, even 30mph do not match some rural winding lanes. Also increased use of quiet electric vehicles introduces a new issue. There are opportunities for raising awareness as well as enforcement. Burwash Parish would like County to introduce a Quiet Lanes Policy. The initial response has not been positive so Burwash has decided to introduce its own Quiet Lanes Policy and invites other Rother parishes to do the same. Burwash will consult with residents and produce verge plans. Rye has a green lanes policy already; other Counties such as Suffolk have quiet lane zones. There is a quiet lanes sign within the Highways Code.

Questions

*Q John Barnes (Etchingam) felt there was probably a need to pursue a complementary policy of reducing speed on minor roads from 60mph. Is NALC a good avenue? Could ESALC take up the issue? It was **agreed** that John Barnes and Bob Franklin would liaise with Emily Simpson at ESALC. Members were invited to contact Bob Franklin or the Burwash Clerk for further information. Bob confirmed that he had already made contact with CPRE.*

12 Presentation by Claire Cordell, Chief Executive Rother Voluntary Action including 'Make it Happen' project

Claire.cordell@rva.uk.com

Claire Cordell introduced herself as the new Chief Executive of RVA (previously founding Chief Executive of Little Gate Farm). She is very happy to visit Parishes and is keen for Parishes to get in touch with her. RVA can provide support with funding applications, and support to start ups. RVA recognises there are some key issues around social isolation and mental wellbeing in rural areas. ESCC recognises the value of the voluntary sector and that it should be supported. Details of a RVA funding workshop on 28 April have been circulated to Rother Clerks. Slides were presented on the 2 projects: HAIRE Project and Make It Happen Project (Bexhill and Eastern Rother). Make it Happen identifies what is going on in local communities to support gaps in services. Please put individuals with ideas for the community in touch with RVA. See Appendix 2.

Questions

Q Graham Peters (Brightling) reminded members of the grants available from the Sussex Community Foundation. A Clair highlighted that SCF will be speaking at funding workshop.

Q Sue Prochak confirmed that financial support applications from businesses should be sent direct to Rother (She is happy to field enquiries and RVA can assist with business and community grant applications). Clubs can be eligible under restart grant 2. Claire Cordell stated that there is sometimes overlap between Rother DC, RVA assistance, Sussex Community Foundation, and wider information on grants from ESCC. RVA produces a monthly newsletter with funding updates – members are invited to contact Claire if they want to be added to the mailing list

13 Dates of next meeting Thursday 15th July 7.30pm on Zoom. [The meeting date and time was decided by member poll after the meeting].

Peter Turner (Icklesham) requested that other parishes wishing to contact Icklesham before the end of April should contact himself as Chairman.

Meeting ended at 12.41 pm

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