

# BRAMBER PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022 commencing at 6:30pm at the Main Hall, Beeding and Bramber Hall, Upper Beeding

## MINUTES

**Present:** The Chair and Clerk of Bramber Parish Council and 9 residents.

The Chair of Bramber Parish Council, Cllr Rachel Burstow, opened the meeting by welcoming those present.

1. **Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting** – the minutes from the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were agreed by those present and signed by the Chair.
2. **Chair's welcome and Annual Report** – the Chair presented her report which is attached at Appendix A. No questions arose.
3. **COUNCIL REPORTS** –
  - **West Sussex County Council** – no update
  - **Horsham District Council** – HDC Cllr Croker presented his report which is attached at Appendix B. A resident referred to the water neutrality issue which has stopped new build planning developments and asked if this also applied to even a new one building application. Cllr Croker advised that, at present, all new planning applications had to satisfy the water neutrality conditions; even a one house development. The conditions imposed by Natural England has, effectively, halted all new building developments in Horsham District.
4. **NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS** – No update.
5. **BRAMBER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN** – The update on progress was presented in the Chair's report.
6. **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR** – none.

The Chair thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 6:56pm.

Signed:

Date:

# Appendix A

## Bramber Parish Council Annual Report 2021-2022

The past year in Bramber has been less impacted by Covid, with a return to face to face meetings but it continues to impact on the implementation of services and the ability of the community to fully engage with each other.

Thank you to Parish Councillors for attending meetings in person, despite reservations and genuine concerns that Council meetings in Horsham were allowed to remain virtual.

### Meetings

There have been a total of 12 Parish Council meetings, and 2 separate Planning meetings this financial year.

The issues we have been asked to consider have been varied : from the impact of roadworks on the safety of residents of Clays Hill and concerns about the activities of ploholders on St Mary's Field to dog poo bins, toilets and the arrival of a green dalek outside St Mary's house!

### New Chair and Vice Chair

In May 2021 both the Chair Cllr Roger Potter and Vice Chair Cllr Sarah Green indicated that they would be standing down from their roles. In June 2021 Rachel Burstow was voted in as a Councillor and then as the Chair, with Cllr Mike Croker being voted in as Vice Chair.

This was a substantial change for the Parish Council, Roger Potter having been an extremely effective Chair for 14 years. A change in leadership has an impact on all members and I would like to thank all the Councillors for their support over the last year.

Special thanks must also go to Cllr Mike Croker whose vast knowledge and interest in local environmental, planning and transport issues has been invaluable to myself, and all of us on the Council.

### New Tree Warden

In September 2021 we appointed a new Tree Warden, Stephanie Shorey, who is also the Tree Warden for Upper Beeding. I would like to thank Stephanie for her help and guidance, particularly in relation to planning applications.

### Committees

#### Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee (Link Councillors Sarah Green and Steve Blakelock)

The main issue for the committee continues to be the lack of free space for future people wishing to be buried at St. Botolph's. There is currently estimated to be ground space to accommodate another 10 years so the search continues for more land to extend the facility.

#### Joint Parishes Youth Committee (Link Councillor Rachel Burstow)

The Youth Service continues to run a range of options such as drop ins, youth clubs and outreach activities. A base at the Cushman Centre has been agreed but Upper Beeding Hall continues to be used. Numbers of attendees continue to be relatively low due to covid and the increasingly popularity of social networking.

#### Horsham Association of Local Councils (HALC) (Link Councillor Ann Blakelock)

Following the appointment of a new leader for HDC, a new way of engaging with residents is being trialled called the "Big Conversation". This is an American style of direct engagement with councillors across town halls, with the aim of encouraging residents to feel more connected with the Council and feel that their voices are being heard.

To further support this the Leader of HDC is happy to come to talk to Parish Councils if they have issues that need to be addressed

#### **Village Hall Committee (Link Councillor Mick Tilley)**

The Village Hall continues to have a healthy budget and has simplified its charging policy. Improvements to the building such as LED lighting and solar panels are also being implemented.

#### **Neighbourhood Wardens Steering Committee (Link Councillors Day and Goodall and the Clerk Paul Richards)**

The Neighbourhood Wardens continue to submit monthly reports which detail the monitoring activities they undertake with residents. Bramber Parish continues to require less of their attention, being focused around the Castle and anti-social activities occurring there.

#### **Climate Emergency and Steyning Greening 2030 (Link Councillors Ann Blakelock and Di Goodall)**

The main activity has been around rewilding and a biodiversity survey. Greening Steyning has become more active over the last year with covid restrictions lifting, and events such as the Repair Café and recycling at the Steyning Farmers' Markets have proven popular.

The 20 mph speed reduction scheme continues to develop following a public survey which strongly supported it.

#### **Neighbourhood Plan**

The referendum for the plan took place on May 6th 2021 in conjunction with the County Council elections and was supported by residents. The commitments of the Neighbourhood Plan have already proven a useful reference point when the owners of Clay Field approached Steyning Parish Council with regards to possible future ownership.

We identified three main priorities from the Neighbourhood Plan for 21-22 as it is a wide ranging document:

#### **Tourism Information:**

We want to develop virtual information for green tourism such as walking and cycling routes, that we can change and update easily. The Lost Railway Project and information post being provided by Steyning and District Community Partnership is something we may be able to expand to incorporate our own virtual information.

#### **Green Tourism:**

We would like to encourage people to visit Bramber and the South Downs sustainably and thus provide a landing platform for the many canoeists and paddle boarders who use the river.

#### **Road Safety:**

The reduction in traffic speed on the A283 to ensure the crossing to Clay's Field is safe and usable merits continued support and focus from the Parish Council. Thanks to Cllr Ann Blakelock for liaising with Cllr Paul Linehan and ensuring we remain informed and engaged.

#### **Audits**

External and Internal Audits have been completed this year with a few minor recommendations which have since been actioned. Thanks go to Paul our Clerk for a successful outcome.

#### **District Councillors**

Many thanks to Mike Croker and Rogel Noel our District Councillors for all they have done this year and for their regular and comprehensive updates on District Matters at our Council meetings.

The Horsham Draft Local Plan consultation process has been affected by wider political issues and the water neutrality issue which has currently halted all new building.

## **WSSC Councillor**

Paul Linehan was voted in as our new County Councillor on May 6th 2021.

## **Parish Councillors**

Tom Day joined us as a new Councillor.

## **Website**

As more of the parish council business is conducted online, the role of our website grows in importance with more information and updates provided every week. I am very grateful to Cllr Tilley for managing and maintaining the parish council website on our behalf.

## **Clerk**

Paul continues to do a fantastic job in ensuring we follow due process and make decisions that are correct and could withstand challenge. I know that we can sometimes find this frustrating in meetings, but he continues to support us and offer sound advice gained from his breadth of experience. It should also be acknowledged that he has had an additional workload of supporting a new Chair and Vice Chair this year.

## **Finances**

Rising costs continue to challenge our reserves, so we again raised our Precept to address this issue. The ideal is that we operate with a reserve of around 50% of our costs and we are currently around 35%.

Bramber PC has set a balanced budget for the next financial year. The impact for an average Band D council taxpayer is that the precept amount will increase by 13p per week (£59.36pa in 2020/21 and £66.07pa in 2021/22).

## **Environment**

- In the Autumn of 2021 the Emergency Committee was called out to pump flooding from the bottom of Maudlin Lane to a drainage ditch.
- In February 2022 the Emergency Committee supported a resident whose wall had collapsed onto the pavement on The Street during the storms.
- A telegraph pole partially collapsed after being hit by a vehicle on The Street and the Emergency Committee contacted UK Power Networks for emergency repairs.
- Flooding outside Lavender Cottage on The Street Caused by blocked drains was cleared by the Emergency Committee.
- The proposed roadworks on Maudlin Lane caused considerable anxiety and anger amongst residents and the Parish Council hosted a meeting with UKPN and WSSC to allow residents to have their concerns listened to and addressed.

## **Toilet refurbishment.**

Thank you to Cllrs Blakelock and Kitson for ensuring that the toilet refurbishment was completed.

We had an official opening in October 2021 and the toilet has been welcomed and regularly used by visitors ever since.

Thank you to all of you for your support and commitment, over what has been a year of change and challenge. The giving of your time on a voluntary basis for the residents of Bramber deserves thanks and recognition.

Rachel Burstow, Chair

# Appendix B

## BPC APM May 2022: HDC Year review

As most of you will be aware, Horsham District Council is the Local Planning Authority, and it is this aspect that probably has the most impact on the residents lives, although other services such as recycling & waste collection, street sweeping and public health can rise to the surface from time to time – the ongoing Covid pandemic being a case in point.

I joined the council in May 2019, and the Local Plan ('Horsham District Local Planning Framework - November 2015') has been under review ever since! Locally, you may be aware of the developer proposed strategic housing site 'NE of Henfield', but there are others 'in the mix' too. One notable 'faller' in the housing race has been the site northwest of Horsham town at Rookwood golf course, the council succumbing to public pressure, as confirmed at the most recent council meeting.

Following public consultation on the first draft (the Regulation 18 submission), a revised Regulation 19 proposal was approved by cabinet in June 2021, confirming that 'NE of Henfield' was also out of the running. However, before this proposal could be approved by council, central government made some significant, and totally unannounced, changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, so further work on the draft plan was needed.

This further work was leading to an anticipated revision and likely approval of the Regulation 19 draft before last Christmas but then, in September, the Little Whirlpool Ramshorn Snail (*Anisus vorticulus*) struck! Or rather Natural England issued a position statement regarding ground water abstraction rates in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone (virtually all of Horsham district, plus parts of Chichester and Crawley) concluding that they could not be sure that there was no adverse effect on the environmental integrity of three areas of concern. These areas are the Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and the Ramsar site in the Arun Valley, where the snail population, along with other indicator species, is fast declining.

The bottom line being that there should be no additional water demand: that is 'water neutrality' has to be demonstrated in any new development, which has effectively stopped most new planning permissions (except for a few replacement buildings), as well as the Local Plan revision. I can not resist calling this a fluid situation, as HDC planners, Southern Water and Natural England work out how to overcome this issue to the satisfaction of all concerned. We councillors are told that it will be a few months yet, due to the nature of the tripartite negotiations, so maybe September 2022?

In the midst of all the above, Paul Clarke resigned as council leader after just 6 months in post, and his successor, Jonathan Chowen has a somewhat different approach to local government, which will no doubt be reflected in the next Local Plan draft. This new approach is evidenced by the three 'Big Conversation' public events, as well as a significant commitment to environmental spending in FY 2022/23 of some £1m.

Speaking of finance, HDC's element of council tax has risen by just 2.9% this FY, a figure that may prove challenging as the ongoing energy prices rises work through the economy, let alone some of the known unknowns, such as the fair funding review (central government support) and food waste collection. The latter refers to a central government commitment to mandatory food waste collection, which HDC has been trialling along with a possible change to the bin collection schedule. Even when optimised, this is likely to add £1.2m to the annual collection costs. Nevertheless, we currently find ourselves able to increase our reserves in FY22/23 ahead of the storms ahead.

Recycling remains a good performance area for the council, with a rate of 54% of the total collection. We are looking to improve this, and I hope you are all aware of the textiles and small electrical items collection service – book a collection online - which was trialled last year and will continue in revised form, as well as small battery collections added to the regular bin service.

Moving on the another of the R's (Refuse, Reduce, Repair, Recycle – other 'R's are available) HDC has a target to be carbon neutral in its own operations by 2030, and for the District as a whole by 2050, with reducing energy consumption as a key element. A 3-yr plan has just been agreed. (Decarbonising the Capitol theatre is likely to

cost £0.75m alone!) This plan also recognises that changing the district has to be a joint effort, with the Community Climate Fund set up to help local communities with their own carbon reduction projects. I would also mention the, initially Covid driven, move to more virtual or hybrid meetings, which has made my council work more efficient, and has also changed the way our officers work, with 2 or 3 days a week working from home, where feasible. This has a knock-on effect on the council's office space requirement, and smaller, more thermally efficient, alternative office spaces are being investigated.