

RUSTINGTON PARISH MEETING

MINUTES: of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting held on 10 April 2025

PRESENT: Rustington Parish Councillors A Cooper (In the Chair), Mrs C Broomfield, M Broomfield, Mrs A Cooper, R Grevett, G Lee, Ms L Lloyd, Mrs S Partridge, Ms M Revell and D Rogers, County Councillor Dr J Walsh, District Councillor S Gunner, Mrs C Ward, Ms R Costan, Mrs C Harris and J Burch (Rustington Parish Council), D Bishop, N Helyer, S Marsden and M Warrington (Littlehampton District Lions Club), Ms C Burton (Zachary Merton League of Friends), P Cavell and Ms P Overington-Gould (Rustington Residents Association), Ms A Clarke and C Fuller (Arun Community Transport), Chief Superintendent S Hale and Sergeant D West (Sussex Police), M Jones (Hope for a Home and Arun LGBTQ Community), Mrs L May and N Taylor (Rustington Short Mat Bowls), Ms B Moody, Mrs S Marsden (Rustington Heritage Association), Ms J Parker-Smith (Blind Veterans UK), Mrs J Pickering and Mrs J Onslow (Rustington Players), K Revell, Ms P Revell and B Thomas

APOLOGIES: Rustington Parish Councillors Mrs V Allen, J Bennett, J Ceiriog-Hughes, Mrs P Gregory, Mrs C Stevens and P Warren, District Councillor Ms L Edwards, Miss A Bowers and Mrs G Elliott (Georgian Gardens Community Primary School), A Gess (Woodlands Table Tennis Club), Mrs S Meekings (Summerlea Community Primary School), Reverend N Loveless (St Peter & St Paul Parish Church), M Pollard (Arun Youth Projects) and Ms M Smailes (Rustington Community Primary School)

Prior to the formal business, West Sussex Divisional Commander, Chief Superintendent Stu Hale, addressed the Meeting and provided an overview of Policing Nationally and in Sussex. He was accompanied by Sergeant Danny West, and together they also provided information on the current work of the Arun Neighbourhood Policing Team.

During the Presentation Chief Superintendent Hale and Sergeant West, referred to/reported on the following:-

- Resourcing Challenges - As with most Public Sector Organisations
- Police Call Wait Times - Sussex best in the Country
- Policing Guarantee - Uplifted by 20,000 Police Officers - Sussex to get more, and will be in neighbourhood teams
- Devolution - Business as usual until it is implemented and 'live'
- Cyber, Fraud and Investment Investigations
- 63,000 crimes per year in West Sussex - Daily in Sussex - 2,000 plus calls a day and 312 crimes reported
- Illegal Encampments - Travellers - Police Response and Powers
- Youth Anti-Social/Nuisance Behaviour
- Shoplifting in Rustington - Only 125 Reports in the last 12 months - Any such incidents need to be reported so statistics can be more indicative of the 'true picture' and will result in more police resources.

Chief Superintendent Hale and Sergeant West then responded to a number of questions posed by those parishioners in attendance, including concerns regarding Illegal Encampments by Travellers, Shoplifting, E Bikes, Hate Crime Figures, Rape and Misogynistic Crime Statistics locally.

The Chairman then thanked Chief Superintendent Hale for his most interesting Presentation and for taking the time to attend the Meeting. He also thanked Sergeant West for accompanying Chief Superintendent Hale.

1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

Prior to the commencement of the formal business of the Meeting, the Chairman of the Meeting, Councillor Cooper, welcomed all present to the Meeting and thanked them for taking the time to attend.

He said that, unfortunately, the Chairman of the Council had been unable to attend due to an unavoidable work-related emergency.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting held on 11 April 2024 were approved by the Meeting and signed by the Chairman of the Meeting as a correct record.

3. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

In the absence of the Chairman of the Council, Councillor Bennett, the Chairman of the Meeting delivered his Annual Report on the activities of the Parish Council during the preceding year. A copy of this Report is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

4. AUDITED STATEMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Meeting received the Audited Statement of the Parish Council's Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The Clerk reported that the External Auditors, Moore East Midlands, had stated that the information contained in the Council's Annual Return was in accordance with proper practices and, apart from one very minor administrative omission, no other matters had come to their attention to give cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

The Clerk said that these Accounts were available for inspection in the Council Offices.

5. FINANCES FOR THE YEARS ENDING 31 MARCH 2025 AND 31 MARCH 2026

The Meeting received a Report from Councillor Cooper, in his capacity as Chairman of the Parish Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee, on the Council's finances for the years ending 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2026. A copy of this Report is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

6. LOCAL SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

The Chairman of the Meeting advised the Meeting that the Governing Bodies from each of the three Primary Schools in Rustington were invited to submit a written Report to the Council prior to the Meeting, to enable them to be distributed to everyone in attendance. Representatives from the Schools could then attend the Meeting, if they so wished, to respond to any questions that might be posed 'from the floor'.

She then confirmed that written Reports had been received from Miss Amie Bowers, Headteacher and Mrs Gemma Elliott, Chair of Governors, Georgian Gardens Community Primary School, Ms Marie Smailes, Headteacher, Rustington Community Primary School and Mr Joe Todd, Headteacher and Mrs Sue Meekings, Chair of School Community Council, Summerlea Community Primary School.

Formal Transcripts of all of the aforementioned Reports are attached and form a part of these Minutes.

7. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

(a) County Councillor Mrs Alison Cooper

Councillor Mrs Cooper delivered a comprehensive Report on County Council matters as follows:-

One of the biggest issues we have faced over the past year has been the closing of Zachary Merton Community Hospital, and whilst we hope it will be temporary, the huge estimated costs of £8M-£10M has put a huge question mark on its future. In my role as Vice Chair of the Adult Social Care Committee, myself and colleagues have been putting pressure on the responsible Trust to commit to keeping it as a medical facility.

There is still work to do in this regard but I will continue to work as hard as I can to keep this pressure up.

Whilst a significant percentage of my case work as a County Councillor is highways generated this year significant progress is being made due to increased funding and changes in Service Level Agreements, new Contracts and even some AI innovations coming through. Rather than bore you all with these details, I've printed off a few notes to give you a summary of these updates and projects. This will be attached to the Minutes, but a copy has been given to everyone present tonight.

However, as far as the County Council finances are being used, the majority of the Budget is spent in two areas and that's Adult Social Care and Education.

There are significant challenges from the increase in Special Educational Needs provision as demands continue to rise year on year compounding the issue.

However, in West Sussex one main challenge and risk to budgeting pressures comes from the increasing elderly population and the rising need for care. Census and public health indicators show that in Arun specifically the increase in population of over 65s and over 85s will be the highest level in West Sussex by 2040 which will create significant issues.

As Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation commences, this will be a challenge to those who will take control.

Increased Care costs are also impacting Budgets with the new National Insurance increases and minimum wage rises compounding the pressure. I'm committed to raising and highlighting the issue at every junction possible throughout the Local Government Reorganisation that will progress this year. It is a complicated issue and one that Central Government must acknowledge is beyond the scope of most Authorities, but particularly here in West Sussex given the demographics.

West Sussex County Council produces a Monthly Economic Snapshot and when looking at the figures they are about a month behind. Looking at these figures is eye opening and in the challenging financial climate I plan to keep a close eye on the numbers.

Examples of topics included are:-

*The number of Businesses closing and the number of New Businesses
Local Benefit Claimants
Local Needs
PAYE Real Time Information
Job Vacancies
Labour Market*

The statistics shown are all across the Country and then down to District level. It's a very interesting snapshot of what's happening in our area and how our area is coping with the economic outlook as this changes. It also shows how we compare with other Districts within the County and nationally.

West Sussex County Council continues to produce its Newsletters and Press Releases on interesting and informative events that are happening in West Sussex and I would urge you all to sign up to these to benefit from the information that is cascaded on a regular basis.

And finally, the Lyminster-By-Pass is due to open on 30 April 2025.

(b) County Councillor Dr James Walsh

Councillor Dr Walsh then reported the he was responsible for a small section of Rustington, namely the North West corner.

He then referred to the following issues in connection with the County Council:-

- *Temporary Closure of Zachary Merton Hospital - In his capacity as a member of the Health and Services Scrutiny Committee, he said that a great deal of the Committee's time had been occupied by the temporary closure of the Hospital - Now estimated that £8M-£10M required to bring building back into use - If it were to close it would be a tragic loss to the community - If the worst scenario was to happen, he was determined to see capital receipts from the sale of the facility invested in NHS facilities in the local area, either Littlehampton or Rustington*
- *County Council's Financial Position - Similar to other County Council's across the Country, West Sussex County Council in dire straits - No national funding reform for Adult Social Care until 2028 - The 2024/2025 financial year Adult Care Budget expected to be £19M overspent and the 2025/2026 Budget expected to be overspent by £63M. Special Educational Needs (SEND) cumulative Budget deficit £131M, expected to increase to £222M by 2026, with no means of repaying it, unless written off by Government*
- *Devolution - I am personally opposed to an elected Mayor for the whole of Sussex, as too big an area, and decision making too remote. Abolition of Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council - To be replaced by Unitary Authorities - Not yet been decided how many Unitary Councils will be needed across Sussex or their shape - Hoping that Parish and Town Councils will be given more powers.*

(c) Arun District Councillor Shaun Gunner

Councillor Gunner then advised the Meeting that there were currently five District Councillors representing Rustington. He then provided an overview on casework issues and District Council matters as follows:-

- *Motorbikes (Home Deliveries), parking on pavement outside of Kentucky Fried Chicken Shop on Broadmark Parade*
- *Garages - Georgian Gardens*
- *Litter on A259 - Worthing Road - To be cleared*
- *Stopping of the introduction of additional Beach Huts on Rustington Greensward (Seafront)*
- *Stopping of proposed expansion of Little Stars Nursery in Sheepfold Avenue*
- *Zachary Merton Hospital - Working with Councillor Mrs Alison Cooper and Alison Griffiths, MP - Will do everything possible to fight to save it*
- *Lack of Local Plan across District - Effectively means that houses can be built anywhere*
- *Similar position to Councils across the country, in that Parking Charges, Service Charges and Council Tax have all increased in cost*
- *Bin Collections - Weekly refuse collection to change to two weekly, but will have weekly food waste collections - New bins to be issued for all*

- *Devolution - What it really means - Not yet known - Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council to be abolished - Parish Council more important as will be likely to take on a wider role with more responsibilities and powers - Already happened in other parts of the country*

The above-mentioned County and District Councillors then responded to a number of questions from individuals in attendance.

The Chairman of the Meeting then conveyed his thanks and appreciation to Councillors Mrs Cooper, Dr Walsh and Gunner for taking the time to attend the Meeting and for addressing the issues raised by attendees.

8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- (a) Concern expressed regarding lack of infrastructure to support new housing developments - *Responses supplied by District Councillors Gunner and Cooper and County Councillor Dr Walsh*
- (b) Concern raised regarding the height of the impressive new Outdoor Fitness Equipment on the Woodlands Recreation Ground - Too high for some people to be able to access and use - *Parish Council to investigate*
- (c) Request for both 80th Anniversaries of VE and VJ Day to be recognised - *Blind Veterans representative advised that it would be recognising both Anniversaries - Parish Council would certainly be laying wreaths at the War Memorial (junction of Claigmar Road and The Street) and The Chaucery Memorial*
- (d) Request for uneven ground at Conbar Avenue Allotment Site to be levelled - *Parish Council to investigate*
- (e) Expression of appreciation to the Parish Council for its continued support of Arun Community Transport and offer to attend a future Council Meeting to give an overview of the activities it provided for the local community - In the year ending 31 March 2025, 260 Rustington residents used the service (25% of total users - Parish with the most users marginally) - *Chris Fuller, Arun Community Transport*
- (f) Concern raised regarding the untidy and unkempt state of the 'building site' at 66 The Street - *Parish Council to contact local Planning Authority to try to get Tidy-Up Order issued*

The Meeting concluded at 9.20 pm.

Chairman:

Date: