

**MINUTES OF WHATLINGTON ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON THURSDAY  
12th MARCH 2020 IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.00pm**

**PRESENT:-** Councillor Fisher in the Chair  
Councillors, Ratcliffe, Underhill and White  
District Councillor Vikki Cooke  
District and County Councillor Field

There were 12 local electors attending

1. Apologies – Councillor Scott

2. The Chairman began the meeting by thanking those attending including the three Police Community Officers, Daryl Holter, Emma Phillips and a trainee. As they were all on call and could be called the Chairman asked Daryl to give their talk.

There have been many changes to their role over the years and have been difficult with the reduced Number of P.C's and PCSO's. It is not run how it used to be they now have 4 – 5 parishes to cover Policing three areas Battle Burwash and Rye. During our Down Time we share areas and jobs covering North, South and East Rother. With the increase in police and PCSO's they should eventually be more involved with parishes, Whatlington will have five PCSO's they can contact and he will pass their details on to the clerk.

Emma Explained they are now based in Bexhill and work cross borders with Kent and Wealden for various crimes, they also work closely with Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Watch. She is also Tutoring and also a mentor, the training now is more constructed with lengthy and longer courses than when she and Daryl started.

Daryl said parishioners can look online at Country Watch and Rural Crime which has messages saying what is currently happening. The crime report for the parish last year was one theft from a shed and one from a car, four suspicious people seen and two suspicious cars all noted but no action taken. noted. Councillor Underhill asked about the people who call selling items. Daryl said we should advise the police They are calling. They may not be doing anything illegal but they can investigate very carefully who they are. Some especially older people get worried with people coming to their door, they could be checking homes to see if anyone was home or if they are being dropped off to sell they themselves maybe being exploited.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their time and all the information given. He then suggested everyone had five minutes to read all the reports before any question on these.

The Chairman then invited any question on the reports

Councillor Underhill asked if the church were buying a fairly quiet hand dryer. The Church Warden said the person in charge of their purchasing is well informed and aware of this problem.

Councillor Ratcliffe asked why the Speed Watch sign was sited by the village car park. The reason is they have to have a 200 metre clear sight of vehicles and this was the site agreed with the police.

They had difficulties on the A.21 as the site suggested was only 185 metres. The police are looking into other sites in order to comply.

## COUNTY COUNCILLOR FIELD

### Report from East Sussex County Council 2020

Once again the County Council's portion of this year's Council Tax has risen, this year by 3.99%. This represents a rise in general taxation of 1.99% plus a further 2% to be spent on Adult Social Care. Local Authorities no longer receive Revenue Support Grant from the government which means that other sources of income are even more important. This is why fees and charges have also increased.

The County Council is still having to make serious cuts to services but this year has managed to create some unallocated funding which has been directed at parts of the Council's work which is under the most severe pressure; Children's Services and Adult Social Care. It is important to remember that, particularly in relation to Children's Social Care, budgeting is very difficult because this is a demand led service; if a child needs care he/she gets it.

Rather than borrowing the money the County Council has put revenue into the capital budget to pay for a programme of dropped kerbs and the never ending need to repair pot holes. It will help but I am sure it will not be enough.

During the year a review was conducted into how the County Council looks after Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. These young people become Looked After Children when they arrive in East Sussex and are therefore the responsibility of the County Council. There is government funding available but it only covers about 50% of the cost. As a result of the review services to these extremely vulnerable young people have been refocused and we are more able to help them.

Sadly I need to report that Broad Oak School, Heathfield, is due to be closed. Whilst on the subject of children, the Children's Centres have been rationalised. The way the funding for this excellent programme was given to Local Authorities meant that often there were two very close together and there were some in parts of the County where they were not well used. The majority which were on school sites have been absorbed into the school and there have been assurances programmes will continue as part of the school's early years work.

Kathryn Field.  
Spring 2020

### **Rother District Council Report 2020**

1. **Elections.** In 2019 the boundaries of the wards covering Battle were changed. Battle North Netherfield and Whatlington is now covered by Cllr Field and Cook whilst South Battle and Telham are covered by Cllr Dixon. There was also a change of administration with the Rother Alliance of Liberal Democrats, Green, Labour and Independent Councillors joining together to run the Council.

2. **Finance.** We must find £3.28 million of extra income and savings in order to balance our budget for 2020. Previously we made savings and raised income to the value of £1.8million in order to address the loss of central government funding and rising costs.

3. **Housing** In 2019 we adopted our new Housing and Homelessness Strategy. We've been working hard to address local concerns about housing,

- RDC will deliver 1,000 new homes in the next 15 years to get the housing market moving. This will be a mix of homes for sale, part owned and rented and for affordable rents.
- Homelessness applications reduced for the first time in two years, but this is still very high compared to before 2017. We appointed more staff to support households getting into the private rental sector and prevent homelessness.
- In September 2019 we had a record breaking 78 households living in temporary accommodation - this included 80 children – and 80% of those had to be placed outside Rother. Our new housing strategy addresses the lack of local temporary accommodation. We committed £3 million to buy our own temporary accommodation in Rother.

**ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT CONTINUED**

- We have over 1,700 households on our housing register (all with a local connection) - rising monthly by an average of 14.
- Last year 60 new affordable homes were built and so far this year 82. This includes seven new wheelchair accessible homes. We expect up to 33 more by spring 2020.
- The new development at Blackfriars, Battle, on the Local Plan for decades, received Planning approval for the spine road and outline permission for the development. The development will supply up to 220 new homes, 30% affordable, but there is still work to do.
- We are currently writing an action plan to reduce empty homes and put them back into occupation.

4. **Waste & Recycling** We mutually agreed with Kier to end our waste collection contract. Biffa, in a new partnership with Wealden and Hastings Councils, started operations in July 2019. Recycling and composting rates appear similar to previous years, but we have had fewer reports of missed bins.

5. **Climate Emergency** - Rother has made a new commitment to a carbon neutral district by 2030. A working group led by Cllr Field has started exploratory work on what needs to be done.

6. **Employment and Regeneration** – RDC is investing in new employment spaces and finalizing the plans needed to create new employment sites.

- We have purchased land at Barnhorn Road, Bexhill for commercial development and propose 3,500 sqm of employment space and a new medical centre.
- The Development and Site Allocations Plan received final approval from Government inspectors.
- We are still lobbying the Government for the extension of HS1 rail into Rother.
- We are creating business space for creative industries at Beeching Road, Bexhill, following a successful funding bid from the Local Growth Framework.
- We are progressing with a new landmark leisure centre and housing at the old Bexhill High School site.

7. **Objectives** - We are working on a new Corporate Plan and will start consulting this summer.

8. **Planning Committee** – We have made it easier for the public to speak at Planning Meetings and the Town Council can also speak at Planning Meetings for the first time.

Cllr Kathryn Field & Cllr Vikki Cook – North Battle, Netherfield & Whatlington Ward

Cllr Kevin Dixon – South Battle & Telham Ward

**3 REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**The Good Companions Report for the Parish Assembly March 2020

As many of you are aware this group has managed to survive for well over 20 years having changed its name from "Whatlington WI", "Whatlington Friends" and now "The Good Companions". Sadly over the year members have been "called" home and yet we still have a core number of 12 people who enjoy each other's company and lunches on a monthly basis. We do not have any membership fees or rules and our members attend monthly meetings if they are able too. It is a very friendly, caring group who keep in touch with each other regularly. It is a pleasure to travel over from where I now live ( 3-4 hours each way on the bus) now to attend our monthly meetings. I am not sure how we find time to eat because we are all busy talking to one another!

If you would like further information on this group please contact Hilda on 01634 932135 [hamishhilda@hotmail.com](mailto:hamishhilda@hotmail.com)

**The Good Companion Outings 2019**

January 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Lunch at "Lavender's" Battle
February 20 <sup>th</sup>	Lunch at "Cake and Bake" Battle
March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Lunch at "The Bull" Battle
April 12 <sup>th</sup>	Lunch at "The Royal Oak" Whatlington
May 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Lunch at "The White Hart" Catsfield
June 19 <sup>th</sup>	Bring and Share Luncheon at the Village Hall which had to be cancelled
July 24	Lunch at "The Moorings" Eastbourne
August 21 <sup>st</sup>	Cream Teas at the "The Waterside Café" Hawkhurst
September 18 <sup>th</sup>	Lunch at "The Bull" Battle
October 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Lunch at "The Black Horse" Battle
November	Lunch at "Cakes and Bakes" Battle
December 4 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Lunch at "The Bull" Battle

# The Parish of Sedlescombe with Whatlington

## St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church

[whatlingtonparishchurch@gmail.com](mailto:whatlingtonparishchurch@gmail.com)

Over the past year the church has continued to see a modest growth in attendance, aided by the varied pattern of services offered coupled with a flexible and open approach. We are immensely grateful to our Priest-in-Charge, Revd. Kevin Mephram for all that he does for the church and we also extend thanks to the Revd. John Hawkins, who ably assists with the taking of some services and also to Revd. Stephanie Prosser for her support.

The monthly pattern of services is an 09.15am Communion on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday's, a Family Service at 10.30am on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday and a 6pm Evening Service on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday with a United Parish Service at 10.30 where there is a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the month alternating between Whatlington & Sedlescombe churches. All service times are shown on our page of the national website: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/search/>, enter Whatlington in the search box to find us, or use the postcode TN33 0ND. We advertise service times on the church notice boards and on the church's Facebook page, plus an 'A' frame board by the roadside. We actively encourage people to join our email list so that they receive regular updates about services, events and other news.

In addition to regular services we occasionally make changes or additions to meet specific needs, the April Family Service this year falls on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday this year, so will be a 10.30am Holy Communion Family Service. Special services over the last year have included a well attended Memorial Service at the end of October to remember our loved ones, a special Service of Nine Lessons and Carols with the Whatlington Singers in December with an attendance of 93 and the Christmas Eve Communion where we had 44 people. The Christmas Pageant also continues to be popular.

We continue to be grateful for the Parish Council's grant for the maintenance of the churchyard. A combination of a contractor and volunteers ensures that the grass is well maintained. Tim Chapman, a member of the congregation does a considerable amount to look after the churchyard and is working to encourage wild flowers in designated areas in line with our plans to encourage biodiversity. We are very fortunate to have volunteers who carry out other tasks, both in the churchyard and inside the building with periodic cleaning parties to ensure that everything is well cared for.

The combination of the two ecclesiastical parishes with a single PCC has settled down well, with the financial affairs of each church being kept separate. Whatlington continues with a single Churchwarden and we continue to look for someone suitable to fill the vacant role.

The church has to meet all its running costs with no financial support from either the Diocese or the national Church of England. That we do so is a reflection is thanks to the congregation and others who so generously support the church in Whatlington. We aim to make what charitable donations we can and have given modestly to both the Seaview Project in Hastings and to the national charity Combat Stress in the past year.

People will be aware of the plans for a new car park for the church and whilst we appreciate that there are differing views, the PCC and wider congregation feel that if successful this would be an unquestionable asset to enable the church to grow and develop. Just as people now expect that the church will have a toilet, people ask about accessible on site car parking. In the past year we have hosted two day long diocesan meetings in the church which show the buildings potential as a meeting venue. We have also welcomed visits from other churches planning work who have been referred to come and see our restored building. The church is also pleased that the Whatlington Singers continue to use the church as their base.

Looking to the future, we seek to grow our regular congregation and continue the unbroken pattern of Christian worship which extends back for at least 745 years in Whatlington church.

Jeffrey Bridges Church Warden

## **VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE REPORT**

Annual Report from Whatlington Village Hall for Annual Parish Assembly 20th March 2020

This year has been quite an expensive time we have had to have quite a lot of repairs done. Firstly the wooden structures under the toilet floor had totally perished and we had been very fortunate that no one had fallen through. Then we had a new floor laid in the toilet areas but the one good thing to emerge is that there is now no smell I that are obviously it had been the rotting wood.

The main hall floor and stage then had a similar problem so they have also been replaced and repaired.

Hopefully In the next few weeks when then weather get a little dryer the outside of the Hall is to be repaired and re painted with weather proofing varnish. This will make it look a lot smarter and in better shape. These repairs have cost us a large amount of money and unfortunately we have lost one of our big hirers the Battle flowers and unfortunately there does not seem to be the business to necessitate having the Hall to prepared bouquets maybe for Mother's Day it may be different.

We still have a good band of hirers and we are hoping to have the Twilight Serenade again this year but with the Ve celebrations the Band are rather booked up but I am hopeful.

We are at the moment trying to prepare a function for Whatlington to celebrate VE Day anniversary. I am sure there will be some from of gathering in the Village Hall

A new venture this year which is only in early stages of preparation is Walking the Parish Boundaries which should make. good days entertainment for all.

That is my report for the year 2019-20

Annette McBride Chairman

## **SPEED WATCH REPORT 2020**

The scheme started in December.

There are five active members working in groups of three or four

The co-ordinator is Anne Smith of Maddomswood Barn, Hoath Lane.

We have been trained, and are insured, by the police.

At present we have two checkpoints: on the A21 junction with Hoath Lane, measuring speed of traffic heading north, and by the Village Hall, measuring traffic in both directions.

We are waiting to discuss other checkpoints with the police.

In December we held four sessions. Our aim is to have at least one a week.

We have to provide a tally of the total number of vehicles that go past us (not all are measured by the speed gun). The total for the first four sessions was 1,600 (A21 + Whatlington Road).

On average 380 vehicles per hour passed us heading north on the A21.

We clocked 28 vehicles exceeding the speed limit (taking into account the extra margin added in by the police).

The highest speed recorded was 61mph.

Of these 21 received warning letters from the police. The other 7 vehicles were not registered with the DVLA and their details were circulated to the relevant authorities.

Steve Turner

1. This is the end of the first year of a new Council. Although there were insufficient applicants for an election to be held, it was pleasing that we only had to co-opt one Councillor. We welcomed Councillor Ratcliffe and the return of Councillor Underhill who volunteered his services. ( if necessary) - and became our co-opted Councillor!.
2. Councillor Ratcliffe brings a depth of experience and a fresh viewpoint to this role, having been a Battle Town councillor as well as other roles in the wider Rother district and Business Communities
3. Whilst disappointing that there was no need for an election - this was not unusual or unexpected. However, that we continue to operate with a full cadre of Councillors is a luxury in comparison to a number of others within Rother. My thanks to those Councillors returning to the fray, your contribution is as ever eagerly anticipated and welcomed
4. I am grateful that there continues to be a core of volunteers that undertake and support community activities within the Parish; this Council , the Village Hall Committee, the Whatlington News, its distributors and new this year. Village Speed watch (Which your Council is happy to support).
5. In addition to these we should also recognize the contribution made to the community by the Church and its Committee and supporters. But, as ever, I know that more participants in all these activities would be most welcome
6. This year there were, as usual Council meetings, and more unusually 1 Planning Committee. Councillor attendance continued at previous levels of 75%. Given other demands on Councillors' times this is much appreciated.
7. The one planning meeting was held to discuss an application by the Church and others for the creation of a new car park funded by a house building proposition. This was attended by 16 Parishioners, indicating the level of interest in the matter. It was agreed that the Council would support the application with caveats regarding legacy use and Highway considerations. In addition to this the Council provided comment on a further 18 applications during the year.
8. By contrast, Council meetings were attended by less than 3 parishioners on average. As for other activities it would be pleasing if we were able to attract a larger attendance.
9. Items discussed over the year contained, as ever; roads (their maintenance. safety and signage), drains and vegetation, waste collection. and electricity supply

10. With regard to road issues Parishioners may have seen some signs regarding speeding as well as the operation (since January) of a community speed camera, by volunteers, within the Parish, on the A.21 and C.293. The ongoing pressure from the Council on road matters does seem to be bearing some fruit. A draft report from Highways England indicated works on the A.21 including pathway and junction improvements. Unfortunately, though mentioned it was not scheduled and had the caveat of subject funding availability. To quote the P>M. some "levelling up" on our road infrastructure would be most welcome. As would proper road name signage. We will continue to press for action on all these issues in the coming years.

11. Likewise we will continue to seek necessary action on the issues of drainage and waste collection. The electricity supply has been improved by the installation, eventually, of a small substation. Hopefully this supply will not be seen as an agenda item for the foreseeable future

12. On finance the Council voted no change on the Parish Precept and overall the Council budget will be able to deliver what is currently anticipated.

13. This year has seen some small progress across a range of items, many of which will, no doubt, be further debated in the coming year. To this end the Parish clerk provides continuity not only in maintaining our records, following up Council actions but being the custodian of the corporate memory, for which I thank her.

14. I would close by thanking our local District and County Councillors for their valued input to the Parish conversations over this year and coming years of their tenure.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.45p.m.