

ROTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Working for the Community

in Rotherfield, Town Row, Mark Cross, Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Dear Parishioner

This newsletter gives factual information about the Council and what has happened during the year 2005/06 and we trust that you will find the details useful.

Hopefully Quality Council status is but a hair's breadth away; Mike Tollit, our Parish Clerk, successfully gained his AQA qualification and is now busily putting together the necessary evidence portfolio. Once accreditation is achieved, it will open up an avenue to grant funding specific to Quality Councils. Less than 300 parish and town councils nationally have achieved Quality Council status thus far, so we will be in exalted company when successful.

The precept for 2006/07 has been set at £45,000, an increase of 3.45%, which is just above inflation. This equates to £29.66 per year for a Band D property within the Parish, or 57p per week. Whilst many Wealden residents have experienced a large hike in their precept this year, Rotherfield Parish, through prudent management over several years, has been able to maintain a modest increase and yet still go ahead with major projects from time to time.

Two new noticeboards have been erected to enable the further outposts of the Parish to keep in touch – one on the barn at “The Boar’s Head Inn” and another at Eridge Village Hall, which will be shared with Frant Parish Council in whose parish that hall is located.

Although we are delighted with the recently improved railway service, inconsiderate parking at Eridge Station has been a major problem for residents and local businesses. Negotiations are continuing with Southern Railway, East Sussex County Council, Action in Rural Sussex and the Police – an amicable solution must be found, and fast.

Parish Councillors will be kept busy this summer responding to the recently-published South East Plan and digesting the

consequences of the imminent Government White Paper outlining the proposals to re-organise local government. There is speculation that one tier of local government is due to be disbanded, but whether this is at County or District level is anybody’s guess. Our Council’s response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister earlier this year (prior to the Cabinet reshuffle) was that it would much prefer to see SEERA (South East of England Regional Assembly) abolished, but perhaps our views fell on deaf ears.

Finally, there was a 37% response rate to the Parish Plan questionnaire sent out in March, including a 48% response within Rotherfield village. The data extracted from the completed questionnaires and the public’s views and concerns aired at the open meeting held in mid-July will be published later this year as the Rotherfield Parish Plan. This document will serve as the bedrock of future planning and spending strategy within the entire parish, and should hopefully prove to be a most useful exercise.

In the meantime, we look forward to serving you over the coming year.

Janice Primrose
Chair of Rotherfield Parish Council

MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN

Cllr Mrs Janice Primrose 750329 E

VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Mrs Peggy Halse Adamson 853990 R

Cllr John Bowerman 852955 R

Cllr Mrs Natalie Bowers 610049 R

Cllr David Clark 852126 R

Cllr Robert Harris 853426 R

Cllr Roger Jaques 852087 R

Cllr Scott Norman 853229 E

Cllr John Padfield 852897 E

Cllr Les Pike 852252 R

Cllr Norman Wickenden 852229 R

Cllr Michael White 852598 R

Cllr Keith Woolley 852841 R

R = Rotherfield Ward

E = Eridge & Mark Cross Ward

ANNUAL REPORT

General

One change took place amongst the Parish Councillors during the year. Ralph Coates resigned due to pressure of work; we are grateful to Ralph for his contribution to the workload of the Council. In January 2006 Mrs Natalie Bowers was co-opted on to the Parish Council; she is a resident of Boarshead and has extensive business experience to draw upon. We look forward to working with Natalie over the life of the present Parish Council. An election is due in May 2007 and hopefully parishioners will give serious consideration to putting themselves forward for election at both Parish and Wealden District Council level.

There has been much confusion about the funding of Police Community Support Officers nationally. Government funding for PCSOs was due to cease in March 2006 and there had been suggestions by the police that Parish and Town Councils might like to pick up the tab. Fortunately, Sussex Police as well as The Home Office have recognised the great contribution PCSOs are making and have agreed to fund them for the next 2 years. Lack of transport has been a major problem but Sussex Police have recently confirmed that suitable vehicles for the local PCSO team are to be provided.

Finance & General Purposes Committee

The precept for 2006/07 has been set at £45,000, an increase just above inflation at 3.45%, and this equates to £29.66 per year for a Band D property or 57p per week.

Grants allocated in 2005/06 were £1,500 to The Rotherfield Players towards the purchase of stage blocks for community use, £1,000 to aid production costs and analysis of the recent Parish Plan questionnaire, £500 to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, £150 to Anchor Staying Put (a local handyman service for the elderly to enable them to stay in their homes), and £425 to refurbish the Rotherfield village sign. Funds have been set aside to help Jo Evans' St Martin's project with public liability insurance and the weekly hire of a meeting room over the coming year.

Recreation & Burial Committee

The application to the Football Foundation applying for grant funding to help cover the cost of pitch drainage of the upper pitch and of a junior football pitch on the lower recreation

Rotherfield Parish Council Summary Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2006

<u>Receipts</u>	
Precept	43500
Burial Fees	2771
Grants Received	3650
Interest	3516
Other Income	2841
Total Receipts	£56278
<u>Payments</u>	
Administration	17880
Grants/Donations	16770
Recreation Grounds	4121
Burial Grounds	3342
Street Lighting	4626
Roads & Footpaths	1305
Other Expenditure	73
Total Payments	£48117

ground has been successful. Plans are now being made to carry out the work in the autumn.

Meanwhile, the Parish Council is progressing with the purchase of a small piece of land behind the Bowls Club pavilion to enable the future development and extension of this building. £2,000 has been allocated in the budget to cover land purchase and planning permission costs.

Unfortunately, nobody came forward from the community to help forge ahead with obtaining matched funding for 2 tennis courts, and the £6,000 set aside by the Council for this purpose has been re-allocated to other projects. The skate park project still has £6,000 allocated towards matched funding, but it would appear that the age profile of the present youth of the Parish has advanced to the extent that there is now a reduced interest in this proposed facility. Consequently, negotiations continue as to whether this project will progress.

We have been fortunate in obtaining permission to provide car-parking spaces at Hornhurst Cemetery from the owners of adjacent land. The safety on Eridge Lane of parishioners visiting the burial ground or attending funeral services has been of concern to the Council for many years, and £4,000 has been set aside to bring this to fruition.

Highways & Lighting Committee (incorporating Footpaths Committee)

The car park in Station Road is now complete and recycling facilities have been installed. The Rotherfield Community Tourism Initiative is being formally wound up in 2006, its task complete, and the sum of £1,600 in leftover funds are to be administered by the Parish Council towards promoting tourism within the parish.

There has been a spate of fatal and serious road traffic accidents on the A267 at Mark Cross and great concern has been expressed by the residents about speeding traffic. The Parish Council is working closely with East Sussex County Council and Sussex Police to find an agreeable solution, and money has been spent to conduct a speed survey in Mark Cross village. Our Rotherfield County Councillor, Bob Tidy, has promised to try to help Rotherfield village with traffic calming issues, but it will inevitably take some time to achieve a way forward which is acceptable to the majority of the community. Your views are requested and are important to be heard - don't just leave it to the Parish Council to decide on your behalf.

East Sussex County Council agreed to re-pave in brick both The Catts Inn side of The Square and the opposite pavement down to Highgate Florists in the Rotherfield Conservation Area. This has been facilitated by Rotherfield Parish Council contributing £7,000 to each pavement enhancement and by securing a grant of £7,000 from Wealden District Council.

Planning & Building Committee (incorporating Conservation Committee)

135 planning applications were processed by the Parish Council in 2005, an increase of 27% over 2004. Affordable housing provision is still a priority of the Council and we are continually working with Wealden District Council to try to provide this much

needed asset. Unfortunately, philanthropic landowners are few and far between – if anyone knows of one, our doors are always open!

The achievement of Article 4.2 Direction for the Conservation Area is progressing well with Wealden District Council and hopefully should be in place later this year. This in turn improves our ability to attract additional grant funding to help enhance our village environment.

Parish Action Plan

An excellent team of local people has been assembled by Cllrs Scott Norman, Natalie Bowers and Robert Harris and they have been meeting throughout the year discussing issues and devising the questionnaire which was sent out to all households within the parish in March.

It is vitally important that the Parish Council and other statutory bodies are made aware of what parishioners wish to see developed for the future (within reason!) and their concerns for the present. The data gleaned will be used to produce the Rotherfield Parish Action Plan, which will prove an invaluable tool not only for the Parish Council but for many other local organisations as well as Wealden District Council.

A public meeting was held on 22 July in Rotherfield Village Hall to which all parishioners were invited to view the initial raw results of the questionnaire. This also presented an opportunity to question representatives from both County and District Councils, the Police, Highways Department, Waste Management, and Recycling. Action in Rural Sussex was also represented, as were several local organisations and clubs. There was a steady stream of parishioners throughout the session, and the opportunity to talk to all those representatives was eagerly seized upon.

YOUR REPRESENTATIVES AT WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL AND EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS:

Rotherfield	Cllr D Logan	01435-865892
Eridge/Mark Cross	Cllr Mrs L Myers	01892-750508
Eridge/Mark Cross	Cllr The Marquess of Abergavenny	01892-750768

COUNTY COUNCILLORS (by division):

Wadhurst	Cllr B Tidy	01825-733151
Forest Row	Cllr F Whetstone	01892-770304

2007 PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Parish Councillors are elected for a four year term and the next elections are in May 2007. For the Council to be able to be nominated as a "Quality Council" all 13 of our councillors must have been elected (as opposed to being co-opted or appointed).

If you would like to become a councillor and be involved in local affairs please contact the Clerk (01892-783899) who will provide you with full information.

WHO DOES WHAT?

Rotherfield Parish Council represents 2500 electors at local level and has powers and duties set by law. It has a small proportion of everybody's Council Tax to spend and in 2006/07 the precept is £45000.

- District services such as refuse collection, housing, and planning are the responsibility of **Wealden District Council**.
- Transport, highways, education and other major services are provided by **East Sussex County Council**. The **Police** and **Fire Services** are also County Authorities.

However, the Parish Council is consulted on issues arising in all these areas (and in others such as Health, the Countryside Agencies, etc.) and can lobby for action where it does not have its own powers.

FOUND A PROBLEM?

Help yourself and the community by using these numbers when the need arises

Use **0845 60 80 193** for
**REPORTING LIGHTS OUT AND
ROAD & FOOTPATH REPAIRS**

Use **0845 60 70 999** for
REPORTING VANDALISM AND CRIME

Use **01892 602454** for
REPORTING ABANDONED VEHICLES

Use **01892 602723** for
REPORTING FLY-TIPPING

If you have access to the Internet you can also report all these and more on **www.eastsussex.gov.uk/fault**

PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

Traditionally, Parish Councils have communicated with local people using notice boards. These restricted the amount of information available and required a journey to find out what was going on. Although noticeboards are still the "official" medium - we have 5 in the Parish - the website is the noticeboard of the 21st century.

Try **www.RotherfieldParishCouncil.co.uk** where you will find a wealth of information about the activities of the Parish Council. Not only will you see agendas for forthcoming meetings and minutes of recent ones, you will also find links to other local government websites, useful contact information, statutory notices, details of current issues and lots more.

SMITH AND FERMOR CHARITY

This local charity benefits from trusts created many years ago for the benefit of the poor and needy. The Charity still receives reasonable sums each year but the number of cases that come to us for consideration has dwindled. Grants are available for those in need, of any age, who cannot get help from any other source. The main qualification is that the recipient should live in the areas of Rotherfield Parish or Crowborough Town.

The trustees consider all applications sympathetically within the terms of the trust and grants have, for example, been made to fund equipment for a severely handicapped person, for pupils with learning difficulties at a local school and for a cooker for a pensioner.

If you wish to apply or you come across cases that you believe we may be able to help, please contact the Secretary on 01892-783899. You may be assured that complete confidentiality will be preserved.

CONTACT THE PARISH COUNCIL

Rotherfield Parish Council
15 Little Park
Durgates
Wadhurst TN5 6DL

e-mail: rotherfieldpc@yahoo.co.uk
phone: 01892-783899