

**Minutes of a Public Services Committee meeting held at the Town Hall, Rye on Monday 3 December 2007**

**PRESENT** Councillors **Granville Bantick (Committee Chairman)**, Lorna Hall, Sonia Holmes, Paul Osborne (Mayor), Shaun Rogers, Sam Souster (Deputy Mayor)

Cllr Keith Glazier (ESCC), John Izod (RTC Age Concern rep), Gina Sanderson (RVA), Keith Taylor (RTC Marsh Link Action Group rep), Mandy Turner (Tilling Green Residents' Association), Captain Paul Tyler (Church Army Schools & Churches Liaison Officer)

**IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Cllrs John Breeds and Jo Kirkham; 8 members of the public - including Margaret Jones (Postwatch) and Roger Pankhurst (Tilling Green sub Post Master)

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*The meeting commenced at 6.30*

**23 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were accepted from Cllrs David Russell and Silvia Willgoss; Sam Bryant (Sussex Community Rail Partnership).

**24 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest.

**25 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of 3 September 2007 (PS02) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**26 MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the last meeting.

6.35 *The meeting was adjourned to hear from members of the public wishing to address the Committee on the subject of the proposed closure of Tilling Green Post Office. (See Appendix.)*

7.16 *The meeting reconvened*

**27 TILLING GREEN POST OFFICE**

The Clerk advised that a meeting of the full Council had agreed that the Committee could respond to the proposed closure of the Tilling Green Post Office on its behalf.

**RESOLVED To ask the Clerk to submit the Council's response – based on his Briefing Note and the comments made by Committee members; to upload a copy to the Council's web site – suggesting that residents use it as a basis for their own responses; to ask the Rye Observer to publish the letter; and to send a copy of it to the appropriate Government Minister.**

Clerk

## 28 CRIME & DISORDER

### (a) Rye & District Police-Parish Liaison Group/Meeting

Cllr Rogers advised that there had been no meeting since the last meeting of the Public Services Committee.

### (b) Rye Local Action Team

The Clerk advised that at the last meeting of the Rye LAT John Izod had kindly agreed to act as Secretary and take notes of meetings; however he required assistance with typing.

**RECOMMENDATION (to PRGP Committee) That the Council contributes up to £100pa towards the administrative and secretarial costs associated with running the Rye LAT. Clerk**  
*Statutory power: Local Government & Rating Act 1997 s31*

### (c) Policing in Rye

Unfortunately there were no representatives of Sussex Police present.

**RESOLVED To ask the Police to provide a written report for future meetings if there was a real prospect that they would not be able to attend. Clerk**

## 29 VOLUNTARY SECTOR ISSUES

Gina advised that RVA was monitoring the new Rye Medical Centre in relation to accessibility. No complaints had arisen so far but this could change as winter got underway.

Cllr Glazier reported that the local Patient and Public Involvement in Health Forum was keen to see the required traffic calming installed on Rye Hill as soon as possible. He had asked the Highways Agency to give the matter urgent attention – but it can take up to 6 months to secure a permanent Traffic Regulation Order.

The Wealden & Rural Rother (WARR) Partnership was putting together an InterReg IV bid, effective from 2009 and was looking for expressions of interest for qualifying capital bids by 18 January. The emphasis was on farming and forestry but farmers'/crafts markets could be eligible.

## 30 MARSH LINK

Keith Taylor outlined the difference between the Marsh Link Action Group and the Marsh Link Community Rail Partnership. The former was a local voluntary group, set up originally to work for the removal of the diesel trains servicing Rye and District; the latter was concerned with the entire Marsh Link line (Ashford-Hastings) and rail services in East Sussex. Both organisations were occupied currently with the expiry of the current rail operating franchise in September 2009. The public and organisations were being asked for their views. In theory, everything was up for review – including electrification.

The MLAG had recently had cause to consider overcrowding because the Marsh Link line services comprise just two carriages. Apparently, the official view is that a train is overcrowded if passengers are left behind on the platform because there is no space on the train. It would be a reasonable presumption that overcrowding deters tourists from visiting Rye.

The Committee Chairman advised that any views on the re-franchising needed to be submitted no later than Easter 2008.

Cllr Glazier considered that local train services had improved over the last 4-5 years. Cllr Bantick noted that Southern's customer satisfaction rating had increased from 87-96%.

John Izod reported that the service had been increased to four carriages for Rye Fawkes.

**31 EMERGENCY PLANNING**

The Clerk advised that the Rye Emergency Action Community Team (REACT) was continuing to progress the production of a local emergency plan but was concerned it might be overcomplicating the draft plan and had, consequently, invited the Rother-Hastings Emergency Planning Officer to meet with it.

**32 COLD CALLING**

The Committee was invited to consider whether to explore the development of one – or more No Cold Calling Zones – initiated (successfully) by ESCC.

It was noted that the impetus needed to come from suitable areas with 'defined boundaries' - such as housing estates, cul-de-sacs and sheltered housing blocks.

**RESOLVED To publicise the scheme within the Council's newsletter.  
Clerk**

**33 FIRE AUTHORITY**

The meeting was asked to consider whether to respond to the *East Sussex Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Annual Action Plan 2008-09* (deadline: 20.12.07).

One of the Committee members present suggested that the primary purpose of the consultation was to secure a change in firefighters' shift patterns which would see reduced cover at certain times of the day.

**RESOLVED Not to respond to the consultation.**

*The meeting ended at 7.53.*

Date.....

Chairman.....

**PROPOSED CLOSURE OF TILLING GREEN POST OFFICE**

Contributions from members of the public present – and Committee Members – included:

- TG PO is easily accessed
- Customer numbers have increased since 2006
- The branch meets the needs of a much wider area than Tilling Green – including (following the closure, in August, of Broad Oak PO) residents of Udimore
- The PO 'doubles up' as a community focal point – the Estate has no formal community meeting place
- The PO helps to combat social exclusion
- Objections need to be sent to Gary Herbert by 24 December
- A petition is being circulated
- A recent protest outside the branch was well-attended and publicised
- TG Estate residents sometimes feel that 'Citadel issues' are given more attention
- The branch is not under-utilised
- The nearest alternative branch, Cinque Ports Street, has heavy entrance doors, no adjacent parking, has shorter opening hours, is not so wheelchair/pushchair-friendly, bus users have to cross a busy one-way road – and it may not be able to cope with any increased demand
- Objections needs to be framed with key criteria in mind – distance to other branches/topography, local demographics, transport and impact on the local economy
- 50% of the newsagent's income comes from the post office services offered
- A (free) ATM and new alarm system had only recently been installed at the premises
- A second protest was planned for 19 December
- Rother DC had set up a working group – part of its remit was to fight the four proposed Rother PO closures
- In order to survive, post offices will have to offer a greater range of services
- 2,500 POs will close nationwide – if some are reprieved, other branches will be selected for consultation
- The relevant Government Minister should be lobbied
- TG is in the bottom 20% of most deprived communities in England
- 80% of all areas have higher household income levels – those with lower income levels are less likely to be able to afford taxis
- The level of car ownership on the Estate could useful be checked
- The 'steps' stated in the Branch Access report is actually just one very small step
- A decision is likely to be made by the Post Office Ltd on 14 January 2008 – Post Watch is trying to get an extension to the consultation deadline
- The Post Office is a privatised company and is not under Government pressure to close post offices
- The Government is reducing the Post Office's subsidy – telling it to become more efficient – and this is 'fuelling' the closure of branches
- The subsidy for rural post offices will continue until 2011. The PO is currently making a loss of £4m a week