

**Minutes of a Public Services Committee meeting held at the Town Hall, Rye on Monday 25 June 2007**

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

PCSO Dan Bevan (Sussex Police), Cllr Keith Glazier (ESCC/Rye Partnership), PC Andy Hanson (Sussex Police), John Holbrook (Freda Gardham), Anthony Kimber, Gina Sanderson (Rother Voluntary Action), Mandy Turner (Tilling Green Residents' Association), Captain Paul Tyler (Church Army Schools & Churches Liaison Officer)

**IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Cllr Jo Kirkham; Alison Dryden – RDC Housing Policy Officer; Insp Heather Keating – Sussex Police; Andy Hemsley – *Rye Observer*; 5 members of the public

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*The meeting commenced at 7.16.*

**1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were accepted from Cllr David Russell.

**2 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

|              |                 |                |  |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--|
| Cllr Glazier | <i>personal</i> | <b>item 10</b> | Non- executive member of Hastings & Rother PCT |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--|

**3 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of 30 April 2007 (PS04) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4 MATTERS ARISING**

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*38 Committee Membership. Inviting Landgate Association to nominate a representative Actioned.*

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*39c) Crime & Disorder – Policing in Rye. Inviting Insp Keating to the next meeting Actioned.*

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*Postern Gate Surgery – stakeholders' meeting See main agenda item – 13.*

*46 Housing. Inviting a RDC Housing Officer to address the next meeting Actioned – see main agenda.*

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting for a presentation by Rother District Council's Housing Policy Officer, Alison Dryden on the work of Rother's Housing Department, social housing and the Housing Strategy 2007-12 consultation (see Appendix).*

*The meeting reconvened.*

**5 HOUSING STRATEGY 2007-12**

The meeting was asked whether the Council should respond to Rother District Council's Housing Strategy consultation and, if so, to agree the method (*deadline: 30 July*).

**RESOLVED To ask the Clerk to respond, incorporating the comments made during the adjournment.** **Clerk**

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow Rye's new Police Inspector, Heather Keating to introduce herself. (See Appendix)*

*The meeting reconvened.*

**6 CRIME & DISORDER**

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

Cllr Rogers advised that the group had not met recently.

**(b) Rye Local Action Team**

The Clerk drew the meeting's attention to a letter from Chief Inspector Steve Brookman advising that the police do not have the resources to provide the LAT with administrative support. The Council's Policy, Resources & General Purposes would give further consideration to providing resources after the Council's new representative, Cllr Holmes had attended the Team's next meeting.

**(c) Policing in Rye**

PC Bevan passed a copy of his written report to the Clerk. The Clerk would copy and distribute it. **Clerk**

Responding to a query from Cllr Souster on a recent spate of tyre slashing in the Tilling Green-Udimore Road area, Inspector Keating advised that her officers had been working on identifying the culprit/s for the last month and had a number of leads – including a description of someone seen in the vicinity.

Cllr Hall highlighted the problem of persistent break-ins at the Memorial Care Centre site and wondered about the implications of this in relation to the opening of the new Postern Gate Surgery. Inspector Keating advised that, as 'new build', security considerations would be 'factored in' during construction.

**7 CO-OPTIONS**

**RESOLVED To co-opt the individuals following on to the Committee:**

- (a) John Izod (the Town Council's representative on Age Concern and Rye Community Centre Association)**
- (b) Keith Taylor (the Town Council's representative on the Marsh Link Action Group)**

Mr Izod and Dr Taylor joined the meeting.

## 8 MARSH LINK

Dr Taylor reported on the issues following:

- *Eurostar* 4-5 MPs had met with a junior Transport Minister to press concerns about the company's plan to relocate services from Ashford to Ebbsfleet. Eurostar had been placed under great pressure from a wide range of individuals and organisations and there was an indication that the company might be considering a shift in its position.
- Overcrowding is still a significant issue on the line. Repeated representations have been made to the rail operator, resulting in (thus far unfulfilled) promises that services would be expanded from two carriages to four once new rolling stock had been delivered.
- The Marsh Link Action Group was continuing to fight for the reinstatement of services to those stations which now received no – or a severely restricted – service and was keen also to see the introduction of a direct service from Rye to London.

## 9 VOLUNTARY SECTOR ISSUES

RVA Director, Gina Sanderson highlighted the issues following:

- *Animate re-launch* This is a good example of the increasing trend towards partnership working – involving Robert Tressel, Animate, the Youth Service, Sussex Careers, Hastings College and Rye Partnership. The same is evident at the Children's Centre where young parents can receive advice on a range of matters – including personal finance.
- *Skate Park* Users had produced a DVD which would inform the application for funding to the County Council's Youth Opportunities Capital Fund in mid July.
- *New scout hut* The Scouts had stepped up their efforts to secure sufficient funding for a new hut.

It was considered generally that their plan to raise c £150,000 was probably unrealistic and, in any case, it was preferable that they should work with other group to create a facility which could be used by a variety of groups and organisations, 6-7 days a week. Apparently, only one in 40 applications to the National Lottery is successful.

- *After School Club* There is interest in re-establishing this facility but there must be evidence of parental demand for it to be taken further.

*Cllr Glazier re-stated his personal interest in the item following.*

## 10 FIT FOR THE FUTURE

The Committee was asked to give further consideration to responding to the Fit For the Future consultation in the light of:

- a) the Public Consultation Summary (including Options 1-4)
- b) the Saving the DGH/Hands off the Conquest alternative proposal ('Option 5')
- c) the public consultation meetings held to date.

It was noted that the Council had authorised the Committee to respond on its behalf and that the deadline for responses had been extended to 27 July.

Cllr Glazier expressed disappointment that so few members of the public had attended the public meetings organised by the PCT to date. He advised that at the consultation meeting held at the White Rock that afternoon it had emerged that there

were now Options 6, 7, 8 and 9 to consider. Details of these were likely to be uploaded to the PCT's web site within the next few days.

**RECOMMENDATION That once details of the new options had been ascertained, to refer the matter back to the full Council. Clerk**

**11 EMERGENCY PLANNING**

Members were asked to consider re-establishing the Rye Emergency Planning Group (comprising currently Roger Breeds, Paul Carey, John Izod, Cllr Paul Osborne and the Clerk – with guidance provided by Anthony Kimber).

Referring to the Minutes of the last meeting, Cllr Bantick reminded members that he had attended the Rye Bay Flood Emergency Planning Exercise held on 16 March. During the event it had become apparent that many organisations were uncertain how they should respond in the event of an incident of severe flooding.

Colonel Kimber advised that Government policy was geared towards encouraging local communities to produce – with support – their own self help plans. A Rye Plan would need to complement the well-developed Rother Emergency Plan, specific flooding plans and those of the emergency services. The Rye Group had a basic plan but more work was needed in identifying locally-available resources, useful local contacts and vulnerable residents. He confirmed that he was prepared to continue to assist the Group.

**RECOMMENDATION That the membership of the Rye Emergency Planning Steering Group should comprise Cllr Granville Bantick, John Holbrook, John Izod, Col Anthony Kimber, Cllr Shaun Rogers – and the Clerk.**

**12 FERRY ROAD RAIL CROSSING**

The Mayor reported that the barriers at the Ferry Road rail crossing had failed for approximately 3.5 hours on the evening of 14 June and to consider whether to make representations to Network Rail concerning the need to ensure continued access by emergency vehicles.

Cllr Rogers advised that there was a mechanism to allow the barriers to be operated manually to allow access for the emergency services but the speed at which this occurred appeared to depend on who was staffing the signal box.

Cllr Glazier suggested that traffic was often held up unnecessarily for a few minutes after a train had passed through Rye's crossings and that the equipment was in need of modernisation.

**RECOMMENDATION That the Council expresses its concern that it took 3.5 hours to repair the Ferry Road crossing gates on 14 June.**

**Clerk**

**13 NEW POSTERN GATE SURGERY: ACCESS**

Members considered the Clerk's notes of the meeting of interested stakeholders held on 1 May.

**RECOMMENDATION To note that patient access to the new surgery would be re-assessed once the facility had been open for 3 months.**

**14 ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY**

The meeting was asked to consider whether the Council should respond to the Hastings & Rother Accessibility Strategy Local Assessment – consultation draft (*deadline:11 July*). The document examines how different – especially vulnerable – groups access a range of services in order to identify barriers.

**RECOMMENDATION To accept Mrs Sanderson’s offer to provide the Clerk with a summary of key considerations arising from the document.  
Gina Sanderson**

*The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.00.*

Date.....

Chairman.....

**PRESENTATION BY ROTHER'S HOUSING POLICY OFFICER**

Alison Dryden (AD) explained that Rother DC does not have a housing stock: it was transferred to Rother Homes, leaving 'residual services'. Rother's Housing Department is divided into three sections:

**a) Housing needs**

This section maintains the Housing Register. Currently c1400 households are registered. When they have vacancies, social housing providers – eg Rother Homes – invite Rother to put forward nominations.

The section deals also with housing advice and homelessness; however, there is an increasing emphasis on preventing homelessness.

**b) Private sector housing**

This section deals with enforcement, landlord-tenant problems, licensing housing in multiple occupation, grants and home energy advice (pt worker).

**c) Housing strategy**

Stakeholder groups meet regularly to monitor and revise action plans.

*Draft Housing Strategy 2007-12*

This is effectively the Housing Department's business plan – setting out its aims and objectives for the next 5 years. It is currently out for public consultation. Responses can be made via the web site or via the questionnaire printed within the full document.

Former District Councillor Souster suggested that the two main housing issues facing the town were the lack of affordable homes and the level of 'second home' ownership. AD undertook to ascertain the number of Rye households on the Housing Register and the length of time they had been on it.

Cllr Bantick had been told that 30% of houses in Rye were second homes.

The Mayor highlighted the longstanding issue of those from outside a parish appearing to 'queue jump' locals waiting for suitable accommodation. AD explained that this was a widespread complaint but Rother had a statutory obligation to accommodate certain groups in need. That said, there was some flexibility. Consequently, Rother had recently amended its points system so that when assessing housing needs, a local applicant would get more points towards their total score, and someone from outside the District would have points deducted.

Responding to a query posed by John Holbrook, AD advised that, in the case of couples separating, the parent with the dependent children received more points.

Addressing a question put by Paul Tyler, AD outlined the different models of 'affordable housing' – in addition to purely 'social rented' properties - to be found in the District:

- 'Open Market House Buy' The occupants pay at least 75% of the purchase price and Mote Housing contributes the remaining 25%. Mote Housing continues to own 25% of the market value.
- 'Part Buy-Part Rent' schemes

Responding to a comment made by Cllr Bantick, AD acknowledged that empty homes were an issue. Rother was working on an Empty Homes Strategy and was working with the private sector to bring unoccupied housing stock back into use. She would attempt to establish the actual number of such properties in Rye.

Replying to a question put by Mandy Turner, AD explained that in certain circumstances, those in need from outside the District would always take priority – for example, those escaping domestic violence.

### **INTRODUCTION BY INSPECTOR HEATHER KEATING**

Inspector Keating explained that she had responsibility for Battle and Rye and the surrounding parishes. She had been in post since mid-April and had been in the Police for 20 years – including periods spent as a Detective Sergeant at Hastings, in CID at Eastbourne and Special Branch at Gatwick.

Her priorities for the next year included reinforcing Sussex Police's Neighbourhood Policing policy and working hand-in-hand with partners.

As Chairman of Animate, Cllr Glazier praised the PSCOs for involving themselves in the re-launch of Animate. Mandy Turner added that there was general satisfaction on the Tilling Green Estate with the way in which the PCSOs engaged with younger people – adding that it was often young people from outside the town who were responsible for unacceptable behaviour within it. Residents had also a better understanding of the Police's Stop and Search procedures.