

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on
Monday 24 June 2019**

PRESENT Councillors Lord Amphill, David Bookless, Mike Boyd (**Mayor**), John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds, Cheryl Creaser, Rebekah Gilbert (**Deputy Mayor**), Chris Hoggart, Pat Hughes, Jo Kirkham, Ian Potter, Andi Rivett, Shaun Rogers, Sam Souster, Sam Wood

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Jessica Neame - Deputy Town Clerk Designate; Paul Goring – Town Sergeant; Louisa O’Shaughnessy – Heritage Centre Manager; Rother District Councillor Gennette Stevens; East Sussex Cllr Keith Glazier; Colonel Anthony Kimber – RNPSG Vice-Chairman; Charlie Harkness – *Rye News*; John Minter – *Rye News*.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm.

42 APOLOGIES

In the absence of the Mayor’s Chaplain, Prayers were said by the Town Sergeant.

43 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reason as lodged with the Clerk – were accepted from Cllr Andy Stuart.

44 CODE OF CONDUCT

The interests following were disclosed:

Cllr Jonathan Breeds	<i>item 53</i>	Rye Wildflower Meadow Trust trustee
Cllr Hughes	<i>item 53</i>	Rye Amenity CIC Director, Rye Wildflower Meadow Trust trustee
Cllr Potter	<i>item 53</i>	Rye Amenity CIC Director, Rye Wildflower Meadow Trust trustee
Cllr Rogers	<i>item 53</i>	Rye Amenity CIC Director

45 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported that recent events/places he had attended included: the Beating of the Retreat (Chatham), New Romney Mayor Making, a Farewell Service for Bishop Trevor at Canterbury Cathedral; the High Sheriff’s Reception at Charleston Farmhouse; the retirement of Viscount de L’isle, Lord Lieutenant of Kent, at Penhurst Place – and the opening of the Rye Community Garden eco toilet.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting for the report of the County Councillor for Rye; the Reports of the Rye Rother District Councillors and Public Question Time. (See APPENDIX A.)

The meeting reconvened.

46 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED To adopt, as an accurate record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2019 (C4).

47 COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED To receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Townscape Committee held on 10 June 2019 (PT02).

48 HERITAGE CENTRE

a) Progress Report

The Heritage Centre Manager, Louisa O'Shaughnessy spoke – and added – to, her written report:

- There was a deficit as at the end of May 2019 of c£5,500; however, this figure includes the cost of the EPOS system and new signage - both provided for within the TH budget – so the actual trading deficit is c£2,000.
- The two main explanations are: the substantial reduction in group/cruise ship Model bookings and reduced opening hours (half-an-hour earlier closing and not opening Thursdays until the end of June).
- The decreased group Model bookings was far lower than expected and is believed to be attributable to Brexit not happening on 29 March – and the continuing uncertainty.
- Although her report estimates the revenue that might have been lost by closing earlier and on Thursdays, estimated costs would need to be deducted. For example, staying open an extra half-an-hour would have cost an estimated £1,053.
- The EPOS system went live on 4 June and is already generating useful data. It has shown that more revenue is received in the mornings, there is a dip at lunch time – and then an upswing towards the end of the day (from around 3pm).
- From July-August the Centre will be open 7 days a week and longer hours (6pm).
- The proposed opening hours in September will need to reviewed in the light of the June footfall findings.
- The biggest fall off in visitor numbers (as identified by Tourism SE) is from 'near European' countries – including France, Germany and Belgium. Visit England has found there has been a drop in visitors from outside the UK generally – but especially from European countries. This suggests that UK visitor attractions/destinations need to do more to attract the home visitor market.
- The policy of switching to local products (and not stocking so much for the foreign student market) has helped to mitigate the loss.
- Local schools need to be enticed to the Centre as part of their local history curriculum. It will require just 5 Model viewings to break even. Once a school group has attended, hopefully, that school would visit annually.
- In order to help raise the Centre's profile locally, the Centre is having a stall at this year's Festival of the Sea.

- The Centre is close to phasing out generic stock sourced from national suppliers and London stock – and it should be gone by the end of this season.
- There are a number of good selling items – for which, it would be helpful to find a local maker: soft sheep toy, glass floats and ships in bottles.
- Rye offers an array of guides and maps; however, it would be better if most of them could be consolidated into one official 'Welcome to Rye' guide. The HC is nearly out of the Rye 'colour guide'.
- Given the current deficit, the proposed new HC web site has been put on hold.

Responding to questions, the HCM advised that:

- She continues to be involved with 1066 Country.
- The HC has no formal link with Romney Marsh.
- 1066 is relaunching its web site – and it is hoped that Rye will have a greater presence.

Suggestions from Members included: utilising Rye's membership of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports in order to attract visitors from member towns; waiting until there is more customer spending data from the EPOS system before implementing changes to opening hours; holding a meeting of the HC WG (including the HCM).

The HCM left the meeting.

b) Payments and Income

RESOLVED To receive and adopt the Income by Customer Summaries and Expenses by Supplier Summaries for April-May 2019.

c) Budget Monitor

RESOLVED To receive and note the actual income and expenditure against budget to 31 May 2019.

49 FINANCE

49.1 Town Hall

RESOLVED To note that:

- a) The approved Town Hall budget headings provisions for 2019-20 need to be re-allocated to match the Heritage Centre budget headings, following the incorporation of the Town Hall and Heritage Centre accounts into one accounting package (to comply with the Making Tax Digital regulations);**
- b) A number of year end (31 March 2019) journal adjustments need to be made;**
- c) The income & expenditure and budget monitor figures for the Town Hall will follow.**

- 49.2 Account Balances – latest statement**
49.3 Earmarked Reserves – latest statement

RESOLVED To note that these will follow once the year end accounts have been adjusted and the accounts for 2019-20 have been updated.

- 49.4 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2018-19 and Annual Accounts 2018-19**

RESOLVED 1 To receive the Risk Assessments (2019) and approve the ‘further actions’ identified.

RESOLVED 2 To receive and adopt the recommendations/suggestions contained with the Report of the Internal Auditor, Angela Alexander (report dated 17.6.19) - and to receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report 2018-19 (within the AGAR).

RESOLVED 3 To receive the Review of Internal Controls 2019 and approve the recommended controls therein.

RESOLVED 4 To receive and approve the updated Summary of Main Day-to-Day Financial Controls (as at 31.3.19).

RESOLVED 5 To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2018-19 (Section 1 of the AGAR).

RESOLVED 6 To approve the (Consolidated) Town Council Accounts for 2018-19.

RESOLVED 7 To approve the Annual Accounting Statements 2018-19 (Section 2 of the AGAR).

RESOLVED 8 To re-appoint the Internal Auditor, Angela Alexander.

RESOLVED 9 To approve the Internal Auditor’s Terms of Reference for 2019-20.

RESOLVED 10 To approve the draft Internal Audit Plan 2019-20.

50 CLERK WORK PROGRAMME/UPDATE

RESOLVED To receive and note the summary of the status of key tasks/projects as at 17.6.19.

51 MAYOR MAKING 2020

The Clerk advised that it had been announced that the early May Bank Holiday will be moved from Monday 4 May 2020 to Friday 8 May 2020 to encourage participation in the 75th Anniversary commemoration of VE Day. Members were invited to consider the implications for Mayor Making.

It was noted that there are a number of petitions calling on the Government to retain the Bank Holiday on 4 May and to declare an additional public holiday to commemorate VE Day on 8 May.

The Town Sergeant reported that the organisers of the Jack in the Green Festival had approached Amber Rudd MP with their concerns – and she had responded to the effect that she would raise the matter with the Prime Minister.

Comments included: Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of VE Day is more important than Mayor Making; a decision is not pressing; Rye Mayor Making always used to be held on a 'normal' Monday (commencing 5.30pm); the Government has not made a final decision; Mayor Making and aspects of the local VE Day commemorations (currently unknown) could be combined.

RESOLVED To monitor the situation.

Clerk

52 RYE TOWN STEWARD SERVICE

The Council was invited to consider forming a working group to review the remit of the service and recommend how it should develop. The Clerk anticipated that one meeting (with input from the Town Steward) only would be required.

RESOLVED To ask the Human Resources WG to take on this task.

Clerk

53 FORMER PUTTING GREEN, TOWN SALTS

Cllrs Jonathan Breeds, Hughes, Potter and Rogers re-stated their interests in this item.

Cllr Bookless invited Members to form a view on Rother District Council's intention to lease the former putting green to the Rye Amenity CIC for the purpose of creating a wildflower meadow.

It was noted that a statement from Rye Amenity CIC had been tabled (**APPENDIX B**).

The Clerk advised that, because the formally publicly-advertised deadline for comments on the proposed lease had passed, RDC had advised that, when making a final decision, it could not formally take into account any view expressed subsequently by RTC; however, the view could be 'noted'.

Cllr Bookless advised that both he – and the Rye Conservation Society (RCS) – had not become aware of the proposed lease until just prior to the deadline for (any) objections. The RCS's two main issues were that a wildflower meadow on the site proposed would look out of place – and the lack of consultation with interested parties (including RTC). The CIC's statement was a useful contribution to the discussion but it would have been helpful to have received this before RDC's deadline. The RCS does not have a problem with wildflower meadows; however, it suggests that there should be a more appropriate place for one than next to a children's play area.

Cllr Creaser suggested that few people have the opportunity to enjoy wildflower meadows. As a green space, the former putting green would be an appropriate site. Furthermore, unlike the putting green, there would be no charge for public access.

Cllr John Breeds welcomed any initiative to increase biodiversity.

Note Cllrs Jonathan Breeds, Hughes, Potter and Rogers abstained from voting on the proposal that resulted in the resolution following.

RESOLVED To support RDC's proposed lease with the Rye Amenity CIC to provide a wildflower meadow on the former putting green.

54 PARKING PLACES ORDER CONSULTATION

Council was asked to consider further whether to respond to the District of Rother (Off Street) Parking Places Order 2019 consultation.

RESOLVED Not to respond.

55 HONORARY FREEMANSHIP

RESOLVED To note that a Special Council meeting will be held on 8 July 2019 to consider a proposal that Aagot Anne Wood be made an Honorary Freeman.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting for disrobing.

The meeting reconvened.

56 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

No members of the public and press were present during the consideration of the item following - and so there was no need to formally exclude them.

57 BUDGET PROVISIONS

Members were asked to review the Council's 2019-20 budget provisions in the light of the finalisation of last year's Annual Accounts and the Heritage Centre's current trading performance.

The Clerk highlighted RTC's cash holding and reserves balances over the last 6 years.

Financial year	Cash held	General Reserve (A)	Earmarked Reserve (B)	Total Reserves (A+B)
2018-19	84,152	10,168	82,266	92,434
2017-18	86,142	29,829	76,789	106,618
2016-17	384,850*	40,618	368,186*	408,804*
2015-16	183,345	50,384	152,727	203,111
2014-15	214,946	89,940	152,869	237,809
2013-14	200,270	88,499	111,771	200,270

*In 2016-17 RTC obtained a £210,000 loan to enable it to purchase 97 South Undercliff (to let at a discounted rent).

It was agreed generally that RTC should take steps immediately to re-build its General Reserve and improve its liquidity.

RESOLVED 1 To delay the appointment of a TH Admin Asst until 1 Jan 2020 (with recruitment commencing late autumn 2019).

Saving (cash/General Reserve boost) £10,052

RESOLVED 2 To freeze grant giving until the new financial year (2020-21)

Saving (cash/General Reserve boost) £4,000

RESOLVED 3 To transfer the provision for 'Employment advice/representation' to the Contingency budget

Saving (cash/General Reserve boost) £3,400

RESOLVED 4 To keep the Assistant Town Steward post unfilled during 2019-20 (but to continue to provide additional support from the TH Keeper).

Saving (cash/General Reserve boost) £4,390

RESOLVED 5 To protect the Rye Town Steward budget.

RESOLVED 6 To put the (budgeted) new Heritage Centre web site ‘on hold’. (Budget provision: £1,500.)

RESOLVED 7 To monitor closely the Heritage Centre’s trading performance and to ensure the Council is prepared to take appropriate action as and when required.

RESOLVED 8 To review the assets held by RTC – particularly the land adjacent to 7 Wish Ward.

RESOLVED 9 To obtain asset valuation estimates.

RESOLVED 10 To continue to consider the Council’s financial health at an additional Council meeting to be held on 8 July 2019.

RESOLVED 11 (In relation to improving/protecting RTC’s finances) To hold Council meetings in August, as and when necessary.

The meeting ended at 9pm

Date Chairman

ADJOURNMENT

45 a) County Councillor's Report

Cllr Glazier reported/advised that:

Funding ESCC was hoping to have been advised how much Central Government funding it is likely to receive in 2020-21; however, the appointment of a new Leader of the Conservative Party/Prime Minister had intervened. Instead, ESCC is pressing for a Ministerial commitment that ESCC will be allocated at least the level of funding it received for 2019-20 – even though this would still leave it with a £4m shortfall.

CPE Following the informal consultation earlier in the year officer has made one or two tweaks to the proposed (Rother-wide) scheme. Officers had offered to discuss any concerns about vehicle displacement.

Pot holes ESCC now has 3 jet patchers which have been deployed as part of a 3-month intensive pot hole repair programme.

Cllr Gilbert *Given that none of the changes suggested by Rye businesses, following the informal consultation, has been taken into consideration by officers, what is the likelihood of further comments being taken on board at the next stage of the consultation?*

Cllr Glazier RDC asked ESCC to proceed with the introduction of CPE in the knowledge that, to meet the earliest possible implementation date (April 2020), the scheme would have to be based on the existing TROs – with minimal changes. He would find out from officers why the comments submitted by Rye businesses could not be adopted.

Cllr Glazier

Cllr Gilbert *Could ESCC address the Rye business community's two main concerns about the scheme proposed – the installation of unsightly, large ticket machines and the loss of (up to one hour) free parking?*

Cllr Glazier Payment via machines is required because, as soon as payment is made, it logs the time the parking stay commences. If an element of free parking was permitted the overall cost of the scheme would increase. Drivers need to purchase a ticket immediately in order to avoid a fine.

Cllr Wood *Both business and residents have reported discrepancies in the scheme documentation published thus far – but officers have not accepted them. How can the public have confidence in the final scheme if inconsistencies are not addressed?*

Cllr Glazier If Cllr Wood can provide the discrepancies he would be happy to take them up with officers.

Cllr Wood *Would it not be in the best interests of the town for the introduction of CPE to be deferred so that a holistic review of on and off street parking could firstly be undertaken – with a view to agreeing a wider parking strategy?*

Cllr Glazier It is too late now. RTC (and others) were consulted and RTC supported the introduction of CPE – and was aware of the timetable and proposal to base a scheme largely on the existing TROs.

Cllr Potter confirmed Cllr Glazier's response in respect of RTC's position and recalled that, at that time, Members were alerted to the possible ramifications of CPE being introduced.

b) District Councillors' Reports

Cllr Stevens reported that, because of the significant increase in newly-elected Members, there was a lot of training being organised – especially planning and licensing. She remains on the Planning Committee and has joined the Member Development Task Group.

The new waste and recycling contract starts on 29 June.

She understood that the draft CPE TROs would be published for consultation in September. She would have preferred to see a period of free on street parking remain – the software used in Jempsons' car park has been written to ensure that those purchasing a ticket are not charged for the first 30 minutes. Surely the CPE machines proposed could replicate this?

Cllr Glazier responded that parking ticket machines use similar software; however, on cost grounds, the Rother CPE scheme does not make provision for a period of free parking.

Cllr Stevens announced that now had a social media presence and would be holding a monthly surgery at the Crown Inn.

Cllr Glazier observed that Cllr Norton does not appear to have attended any RTC or Icklesham PC meetings since his election.

Cllr Jonathan Breeds recalled that, some years ago, the Rye & District Chamber of Commerce operated a scheme which enabled its customers to obtain a parking refund.

Cllr Lord Ampthill congratulated Cllr Stevens on her re-election and suggested that the RTC-RDC Liaison Committee could be used to discuss CPE and the future of the Landgate.

c) Public Question Time

Colonel Kimber highlighted the upcoming RNP Referendum on 27 June. He had done all he could do encourage people to vote. It appears that quite a few members of the public still do not understand neighbourhood planning. Nothing can be done about this at this stage. Assuming the Plan is approved, there will be quite a bit of work remaining. It will be necessary to liaise with RDC Planning to ascertain what happens next from its perspective.

John Minter stated that the (tabled) CIC/Wildflower Trust briefing contained a number of errors in relation to *Rye News*. The document mentions three pieces that were published. He considered that one – an account of deliberations at RDC – was entirely factual. Kenneth Bird's opinion piece was published on 30 May. It is a personal view and is not the position of *Rye News*. Another opinion piece followed – the view of the Rye Conservation Society – which was submitted by Cllr Bookless.

Cllr Potter responded that, as far as he could recall, the CIC/Trust briefing complains only about the article written by Cllr Bookless.

53 Former Putting Green, Town Salts**Joint statement from Rye Amenity Community Interest Company and The Rye Wildflower Meadow Trust**

Rye Town Council (RTC) is due to discuss a rather vague agenda item, tabled by Cllr D Bookless, at a meeting to be held on Monday, 24 June 2019. The agenda item (53) reads:

“To consider Rother District Council’s intention to lease the former putting green to the Rye Amenity CIC for the purposes of creating a wildflower meadow.”

Background

The former putting green:

Rother District Council (RDC) ceased operating a putting green on the site many years ago. Shortly thereafter, RDC asked interested parties, including RTC if they wished to take on this area of land, either as a putting green or for other community use. RTC discussed this at a full Council meeting and opted not to take on the former putting green. It can only be assumed that there were no expressions of interest at all.

RDC has since filled in the holes and bunkers of the former putting green and laid additional turf. More recently, picnic tables have been added to the area and these appear to have been well received by both locals and visitors. The fence delineating the former putting green from the rest of the Town Salts, remains in situ.

Rye Amenity CIC:

Rye Amenity Community Interest Company (the CIC) was incorporated in July 2011, with the sole intention of providing services and improving amenities for the Parish of Rye.

Our first initiative was always intended to be the devolution of the two allotment sites in Rye, in the event that RTC and RDC could not come to an agreement over the sites. Agreement was never reached between the two Councils. As a result, RDC invited expressions of interest from individuals, corporate bodies or community organisations, to take on a lease for, and management of the allotment sites. There was relatively widespread interest and numerous bodies applied. The CIC, having gone through a formal process, was subsequently granted a 25 year lease from December 2013.

On 2 June 2018, the CIC launched a survey (via its website and on social media) about a new project ‘that we are considering for Rye.’ The survey is still on our website and social media and remains open.

The survey comprises seven questions in total. Four of these are aimed at recruiting potential volunteers (if the project were to go ahead etc.). The three main questions of note are as follows:

Q1. A Community Wildflower Meadow would enhance the open spaces available in Rye?
(10 = strongly agree, 0 = strongly disagree)

Q2. I currently use the open spaces/recreational facilities in Rye (10 = very regularly, 0 = never)

Q3. I would be likely to use the recreational facilities provided by a community Wildflower Meadow (10 = strongly agree, 0 = strongly disagree)

94.37% of respondents to the survey, to date, are from 'Rye and the surrounding villages'. The average score for question 1 has been 8.8 and the average score for question 3 has been 8.

46 respondents, to date, have actually volunteered their time/services to work on the project if it were to go ahead. We have had other (offline) pledges of support and assistance, including from a leading expert on native wildflowers.

The Rye Wildflower Meadow Trust:

The Trust was set up by a Deed of Trust, executed on 6 July 2018. It is currently an unregistered charity, the minimum turnover requirements for registration in law (£5,000.00 per annum) having not yet been met. The objects of the Trust are as follows:

"To establish a native wildflower meadow(s) in the town of Rye, East Sussex, to:

1. Promote the advancement of environmental protection and improvement by improving plant diversity and insect/invertebrate/bird/mammal biodiversity; and enhance the urban environment throughout the seasons.
2. Promote citizenship and community development by involving the local community in managing the site to foster a greater sense of citizenship and community."

The Trust is the fundraising vehicle for the proposed project; it being more efficient to have a charity to raise funds, apply for grants etc.

Our response to the concerns raised by both Rye News and the Rye Conservation Society

Rye News originally featured an article some weeks ago in which it was suggested that RDC was planning to sell the former putting green site to the CIC. That article has since been deleted. For the avoidance of doubt, neither the CIC nor the Trust has ever been offered the chance to purchase the former putting green from RDC.

To our knowledge the site is not for sale. In the unlikely event that the site were offered for sale, neither the CIC nor the Trust would be interested in purchasing it; indeed we would fight for the land to remain in public ownership. The overriding reason we requested a 25 year lease and nothing longer, was to avoid the accusation that any lease is so long that it is 'tantamount to the freehold'.

The original and highly erroneous Rye News article appears to have been replaced by a more innocuous article on 30 May 2019. We have no specific response to make in relation to this.

On 13 June 2019, Rye News published a further article, most of which was devoted to the objections raised to the granting of a lease by RDC for the former putting green for our stated intention of establishing a native wildflower meadow. In that article, the Chair of Rye Conservation Society, Mr David Bookless, sets out the Society's concerns. We will respond to each of those concerns in turn:

“1. An area of unmown grass meadow in the middle of a flat grass playing field will look inappropriate.”

Our response:

- “...unmown grass meadow...” is not akin to a managed wildflower meadow. While there will undoubtedly be grasses planted, the emphasis is on native wildflowers.
- “...in the middle of a flat grass playing field...”: in our opinion, on any view of the former putting green site, it is not in the middle of a playing field. It is clearly delineated by a fence, to the side of a playing field. On the other side of the site is a tarmac footpath and the Bowls Club.
- “...will look inappropriate.” One might argue that a pavilion and Bowls Green with high hedges look equally ‘inappropriate’.

“2. Visitors will wonder why that “bit hasn’t been cut”.”

Our response:

- We are not proposing to simply let the grass grow! A wildflower meadow does get mown, albeit less frequently than a lawn.
- Please credit ‘visitors’ with some common sense: a wildflower meadow looks sufficiently dissimilar to a playing field and is hardly likely to confuse ‘visitors’ into thinking that the wildflower meadow (fenced off from the playing field) is just an unmown part of the playing field. By the same token, we are quite sure that ‘visitors’ don’t look at the clearly delineated Bowls Club and think to themselves ‘why has that been mown to a much better standard than the playing field?’

“3. Does the Rye Amenity CIC have the expertise and long-term personnel with commitment to maintain such a project?”

Our response:

- With regard to the expertise, specifically in relation to the establishment of a native wildflower meadow: no, we don’t need it. Please see the example below:

If a geography teacher wants to put carpet in her new house but hasn’t previously been a carpet fitter and doesn’t like DIY, does that mean she is precluded from ever having carpet in her house? Of course it doesn’t! She either asks a friend or family member (preferably one who can fit carpets) to assist her or she engages the services of a carpet fitter.

Our proposed project takes the common sense approach that expertise required for the project will be drafted in, through a mixture of volunteers and contractors.

- As for the query about personnel, we do not currently have any employees between us and nor do we propose to recruit any. In our business to date, we engage the services of others as and when required. We currently regularly use labourers, a plumber, a tree surgeon and the Rye Town Steward. This is much more cost-effective to us, in terms of both time and money, than hiring our own staff.

“4. Neither the Town Council nor interested bodies such as the Bowls Club, have been consulted about this project which will be a prominent feature in a highly visible part of the setting of the historic core of Rye.”

Our response:

- This has not happened because the project is still very much in its infancy. We need to secure a site for the proposed meadow before we can start consulting on specifics. To be clear, if we are granted a lease for the site, a wildflower meadow is not going to pop up overnight. We cannot foresee being able to commence work on the proposed meadow (wherever it may be) before 2021. This gives plenty of time to consult with relevant bodies, let's face it, we are talking about a small patch of land in Rye, not Brexit!
- However, consultation is an important point and will, without doubt, take place.
- Also, for the avoidance of doubt, if a lease is granted we will ensure that there is a clause that prior to commencing work on the meadow proper we will be required to keep the grass that is in situ regularly mowed. This will allow the site to make an attempt at blending in with the adjacent playing field (despite the fence) while still looking at odds with the standard to which the bowls green is currently mowed!

“5. Details of the proposed leasehold arrangements have not been made public together with any conditions relating to future use of the property and its upkeep.”

Our response:

- No they haven't. We don't have them yet either. They will be a matter for negotiation between RDC and the CIC, if RDC's Cabinet agrees to the granting of a lease at its meeting in September. So far, all RDC is doing is advertising its intention, as per the relevant legislation.
- Notwithstanding the above, we will want RDC to be thorough in its requirements to safeguard what is and should remain a public open space. We would hope that any lease for this site will be just as stringent as the lease for the allotments, which, as you may have noticed, still doesn't have a theme park on it!

“6. How will there be control of weeds and seeds contaminating adjacent green open spaces?”

Our response:

- This will be discussed with consultees as and when consultation on project specifics begins.

“7. How will access to the area by locals and visitors be controlled/affected?”

Our response:

- Save for short periods of time during the establishment of the meadow, it will remain a public open space. We have already advised RDC that we have no plans, for example, to remove existing picnic benches and that, if anything, we may add to the number.
- There are also no plans to exclude dogs from the site.

With regard to the rest of Rye News' article which states that this would set a precedent “of carving up of the Salts into separately owned plots for all sorts of activities.” With respect, this is nonsense. With or without the granting of this lease the land will be owned by RDC.