

Parish Assembly 2018

The following notes summarise the proceedings at the Assembly held on 24 April 2018 at the Memorial Hall, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm.

1. Welcome from Chairman and opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed those present and highlighted how full the Hall was. He thanked Saxonwood Women's Institute for, once again, producing the tea and coffee. Appreciation of the effort made by various groups and organisations to display their activities was also emphasised.

Cllr Furness conveyed the sadness felt by so many at the passing of Cllr Richard Jessop, a dear colleague and friend who had been so enthusiastic in his efforts for the good of Battle. He reported that Cllr Jessop had generously paid for the Mayoral Chain that he and future Mayors can be proud to wear.

Fellow Councillors were thanked for their support and hard work on behalf of the Town. Cllr Furness highlighted the Council's Annual Report that had been distributed throughout Battle and Netherfield and included reports from Rother and County Councillors.

2. Written questions submitted prior to meeting

The Chairman confirmed that a suggestion had been made that **Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Chairmen of Committees consider offering drop in "surgeries" so that residents of the parish could meet with the Councillors to discuss ideas and matters that concern them.** Council felt that this was an excellent idea to be trialled for a 6 month period. The dates and times will be publicised appropriately.

Cllr Gyngell, Chairman of Planning & Transport Committee, advised that 4 questions had been received and responses had been sought from relevant officers:

- I. **Given that nationally, 70% of journeys are less than 5 miles. What data is available that shows how many journeys are THROUGH Battle and how many start or end locally?** Information is not available as travellers would need to be stopped to respond.
- II. **In relation to balancing the needs of different road users, how many pedestrians/cyclists are around vs the no of motor vehicles?** No specific data available although school data is awaited and will be forwarded to the enquirer.
- III. **What steps are being taken to encourage local residents to cycle and walk? The benefits include, health, environment, social interactions, and it also brings more business into the town, e.g., developing a cafe culture.** The Council consider housing developments with advice from Battle Local Action Plan Steering Group (BLAP) and Ramblers to identify and control issues in relation to cycling and walking. It actively supports projects BLAP are taking forward eg the steps to ramp at Mountjoy/Bowmans Drive and the Health Pathway at the recreation ground. Both these groups welcome new members to progress these schemes. The Council plans to provide a café within the Pavilion to serve users of the recreation ground. The British Charity Sustrans will be producing a report soon of routes for cycling and walking.
- IV. **It is recommended that 'for residential streets and other town and city streets with high pedestrian and cyclist movement, local traffic authorities should consider the use of 20 mph schemes'; given the most recent accident where a 12-year-old boy was injured in a hit and run accident and the fact that Battle is served by three Schools and local businesses where people are walking and cycling to school and work, what is being**

done to ensure the safety of the residents? (SECTION 6: URBAN SPEED LIMITS. Point 77: Grundy et al, 2008) The Council will be receiving a presentation in May from a local group campaigning for a reduction in speed to 20mph. However, the Town Council has no authority to implement changes. East Sussex County Council had advised that alterations are expensive and are carried out in order of priority. It was noted that signs alone are not effective and zones, although more successful, are costly. A road crossing on Battle Hill had been requested and is being considered.

3. The Battle Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Russell(AR), on behalf of the Steering Group, reported that Battle is required to allocate an additional 425 units and Netherfield 48. He emphasised that the aim of a Neighbourhood Plan is to influence the type and location of sites and to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place. AR confirmed that the current rate of Community Infrastructure Levy due to the Town Council is 15% and this would increase to 25% of all new development once the NHP is agreed. He advised that a Referendum would be called at the end of the year at which a majority of residents would be required to agree the proposed document prior to consideration by Rother District Council.

AR reported that the progress had been challenging as all members of the group are amateurs and the previous Chairman and Secretary had resigned within a short space of time. He was pleased to confirm that a Consultant is now working with the group, a new website is available and improved communication has been instigated.

AR stated that a Heritage Working Group has been initiated to produce a list of local heritage assets and that all interesting buildings should be reported to the Town Council for consideration.

Finally, AR invited new members to join the Battle Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

4. NatWest Bank Forward Plan

Claire Lands, Battle Branch Manager and Community Banker, reminded the meeting that the branch will be closing in one month but that various services will be provided locally via drop-in sessions at Battle Library and, for vulnerable customers, home visits would be available. She confirmed that, as part of her role, she visits schools to promote money sense and attends community groups to raise awareness of scams. Ms Lands left her business cards for further information.

5. Wild flowers in Battle

Cllr Furness(DF) reported that Keith Datchler and Fergus Garrett had sent their apologies. He reported that the Town Council have been working with these renowned experts and other volunteers to encourage wildflowers and therefore wildlife species as a result of an invitation to attend Great Dixter where Huw Merriman MP was promoting the scheme to encourage wild vegetation. It had been quoted that 93% had disappeared since WW2 which had resulted in poor wildlife including bees and butterflies. DF confirmed that the roundabout had been laid with wildflower turf and lost butterflies and bees had already returned. He reported that 1000 plugs had been planted on Caldbec Hill which will produce a wonderful display for residents and tourists to the town. DF advised that volunteers are working hard and had taken beautiful photographs for a newly formed website. He confirmed that, after this year, due to the financial restraints at East Sussex County Council, the grass cutting could be reduced from 6 to 2 per year and this would be in-line with the wildflower scheme. Cllr Furness highlighted the attendance of the Bee Association who were happy to talk about the benefits of this project.

6. Plans for the Almonry Community Heritage Centre

Cllr Kiloh(MK) reported that the proposed development started over 2 years ago and that planning permission had now been received. She confirmed that discussions are ongoing with various

groups to agree what a heritage centre would consist and it is anticipated that this would include education to promote that Battle is a town of more than just the Battle of 1066. MK advised that the plans and proposals will be exhibited prior to a grant application being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund in August with an initial decision due by December 2018.

7. Proposed memorial event on Abbey Green – commemoration of the signing of the 1918 Peace Treaty

Cllr Russell(AR) reminded those present that Battle no longer have a branch of the Royal British Legion and the Town Council had therefore been asked to facilitate the Parade for Remembrance Day in 2017. He said that, as 2018 is such an important year, it was felt that there should be a significant event to mark the commemoration and this had been subject to some discussion. AR confirmed that a National Lighting of Beacons had recently been presented by NALC which would involve over 1000 beacons across England being lit at 7pm. He reported that the Council felt this would be a fitting homage to the fallen, both away and on the home-front; together with those that kept the wheels of industry and feeding of the nation continuing throughout the war period. AR confirmed that the Dean, English Heritage and several local groups had expressed an interest in being involved in the wider event that might include poems and music. It was agreed by those present to proceed with this proposal.

8. Autism Awareness

Sarah Clements(SC), Autism Sussex identified the local organisation that work with people across all ages within the autism spectrum. She confirmed that it is not a mental health condition and that it appears more boys are prone to the condition than girls. SC reported that diagnosis is increasing although this may still take years. She emphasised the difficulties of social interaction, language communication, flexible thought and imagination issues. Those with the condition may lack empathy, have obsessive observations and be hyper or hypo sensitive.

SC highlighted that the organisation is person centred to ensure needs are met.

9. Presentation of the Community Awards

The Chairman was delighted to present an Award to:

- members of Beautiful Battle in recognition of their constant hard work to make not only the Almonry garden but many areas throughout the town look wonderful. This includes, not only the physical work of planting and maintaining but also fundraising and selection of plants for both the summer and winter periods;
- Tina Greene for her continuing achievements. Initially with the creation and production of the Battle Tapestry that involved so many; both within the community and further afield and now taking forward, with the Battle Twinning Association, a further 2 tapestries that will depict events from the Norman invasion of 1066.

10. District/County Councillors

Cllr Field(KF) highlighted the increase in precept of 6%; mostly comprising the Adult Social Care levy. She confirmed that £600k had been 'shaved' from the music service but more may be needed. KF reported that the campaign for a pedestrian crossing on Battle Hill is ongoing and is now on the list for consideration. She emphasised that traffic speeds remain an issue as police do not have the resource to enforce and there is no evidence of need to reduce the speed limits.

Cllr Dixon(KD) confirmed that he and Cllr Field are two of 5 District Councillors for the Battle area. He reported that Civil Parking Enforcement has been approved by Cabinet but will take approximately 2 years to complete. KD advised that there is no news on the provision of a road at Blackfriars. He highlighted the poor rubbish/recycling services and suggested that reports could be passed to Councillors for assistance. He confirmed that the contractor for this service will be changing in 2019. KD recommended the Rother "My Alerts" as a good source of

information. Finally, he reported that RDC are borrowing money to buy properties out of area to raise funds for the future.

11. Open forum

The Chairman invited comments from the audience to Councillors or Ch Insp Steve Curry.

In response to comments on potholes, Cllr Field reported that Mount Street, Virgins Lane and Caldbec Hill are due for resurfacing work; not patching.

A request to empty the recycling bins at Market Road was noted.

Concern at the high level of wildflowers on the roundabout was expressed. Cllr Furness reported that these should be lower in future years but that the view of Sussex Police and East Sussex Highways is that visibility should not be across a roundabout so this did not present a danger.

The Boxing Day meeting on the Abbey Green was raised in relation to law breaking and Ch Insp Curry responding that whilst it was an emotive subject, the role of the police is to enforce law; the meet is not against the law.

The resurfacing of the tarmac between Battle Train Station and Marley Lane was noted.

It was suggested that as speed of traffic on Battle Hill can be excessive, a pelican crossing would be more suitable. Cllr Field confirmed that residents generally object to lights on crossings. It was recorded that drivers are responsible for their own education on speeding.

The use of the Market Square as a car park was highlighted. Cllr Furness stated that this is private land although the Council is speaking with Jempsons to try and resolve this issue.

Congratulations were expressed to the Council for taking forward the Remembrance Day event that will encompass the whole of the Battle area. It was asked that the names of those missed from the War Memorial will be remembered. Cllr Furness reported that a grant to refurbish the war memorial and possibly include the additional names was being investigated.

In bringing the Assembly to a close Cllr Furness thanked all present for their attendance.