

MOUNTFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
Tuesday 14 April 2026, 7.30pm
CHAIR'S OVERVIEW 2025-26

We continue to let Rother District Council know our views on planning applications – and planning-related matters – in the Parish.

We were one of a few number of parish councils to actually support an application for a small traveller site. The one in question being an application in London Road, known as Valentine Ridge, for 4 static homes, 4 touring caravans and day rooms. The site is well screened and the applicant assured us that the accommodation would be for her – and her extended – family. We were, therefore, exceptionally disappointed when we saw that a proposal that the site be extended had been submitted as part of Rother's recent site allocations consultation. We take the view that this would constitute overdevelopment and would have an harmful impact on the National Landscape.

We were even more horrified to see an actual application for an even larger traveller site behind the Mountfield Household Waste & Recycling Centre (aka 'the tip'). This proposal – yet to be determined – is for 9 statics, 9 touring caravans and 9 day rooms. There have been many objections – and not just from the Parish Council and residents. Gypsum, East Sussex's Waste Team and Veolia – have all set out their concerns. The most obvious issue is how vehicles would access – and leave - the traveller site if cars are queuing with their waste– without entering the actual tip site.

Staying on London Road, we are still seeing rainwater run-off cascading down towards the level crossing from Johns Cross when the culvert can't cope with the volume of water that has accumulated in the adjacent field. East Sussex Highways did do some work on the culvert – and there does appear to be an improvement – but it remains on Highways' radar – as does the frequency of broken drain covers between Solomon's Lane and John's Cross.

You may have noticed that the Parish Council Tax charge – known as the precept – has increased by 25% for the coming year. This sounds alarming but it actually represents an additional £15 a year or so for a Band D Tax Payer.

For many years the Parish Council has kept its precept increases low – however, there comes a day of reckoning, when it is no longer a sustainable practice. As we all know, the cost of virtually everything has risen significantly. Last year we funded a new piece of play equipment, a Catboat. We would have liked to have provided something else – but this wouldn't have left us with much in reserves – and we were aware also that a new cess pit is required on the Cricket Field – a piece of work that has now been commissioned. It remains our intention to purchase more play equipment – possibly a climber of some sort.

We are conscious also that a number of the grit bins need to be replaced. More expense! We will shortly be surveying them to determine which should take priority – including whether they are in the right position – and also whether they are actually needed.

Some things don't change: we still have the same vacancy on the Council that we had a year ago! Being a councillor isn't that onerous: the Council meets here, every two months, on a Tues evening – usually for around an hour and a half.

If this is something that might be of interest to you, to find out more about what is involved, please have a chat with me, Irene, or one of my Council colleagues before you go.

A site has been identified for the planting of a Wild Service Tree to commemorate the life of my predecessor, Peter Miles. His wife, Val has kindly offered to check the tree canopy at the location during this summer – in order to be (reasonably) certain that the tree would thrive there.

Not much has happened since Southern Water obtained a Lawful Development Certificate in relation to its proposed banks of solar arrays at the Pumping Stations. Our working group (which includes those neighbouring the site) continue to liaise with Southern Water and press for refinements. Some small successes include tree planting – to

improve screening at the top of the site – and getting the proposed CCTV cameras lowered.

Although we were not successful in persuading National Highways to retain – and even extend – the former 30mph limit at John's Cross, the experimental 40mph limit – including the stretch at Vinehall that was 50mph – has now been made permanent.

Before closing, I guess I should mention that rapidly changing world that is devolution and local government re-organisation.

Last year, we were told that, in Sussex, the district, borough and county councils would be replaced with unitary authorities – and a new Sussex-wide combined authority would be created, headed by a directly elected Mayor.

What we know currently is that the Mayoral election has been postponed until 2028 – but the Combined County Authority will be established in advance. Following a legal challenge, the previously cancelled County Council election will go ahead, next month. The Government is still to make a final decision on the configuration of unitaries across Sussex.

I suspect most people don't particularly care much about which local authority delivers what – so long as they can see that the public services that are needed are delivered – and at a reasonable cost. Regrettably, the Government's devolution and local government re-organisation agenda won't suddenly produce more funding for local government. The Government hopes that the Regional Mayors will improve their area's prosperity and that reducing the number of local authorities will result in administrative savings. None of this is guaranteed, of course, and there are, indisputably, risks with decisions being made at a higher level – such as the lack (or complete absence) of local knowledge.

Finally, as is customary at this time of the year, on behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who do your bit, typically selflessly and without fanfare, to try and make our Parish a better place – be it helping to run our community and sporting organisations and initiatives, picking up litter, volunteering, fundraising, reporting problems, or checking up on neighbours. It is very much appreciated.

Very finally, I would like to thank my Council colleagues for their continued support – especially Neil, our Vice Chairman – and also Irene, our Clerk – who, hopefully, will get responses from me a bit sooner now that I am a part-time wage slave!

Richard Farhall, MPC Chairman