

## **Report for Whatlington Parish Assembly**

### **East Sussex County Council:**

- The County Council's portion of Council Tax will rise by 4.99%. This includes a 2% precept for Adult Social Care.
- Government's view was that any shortfall in the budget should be filled from reserves. This was done, £9m, but this is only a short term fix.
- Children's Services has been inspected by Ofsted and been judged Good with Outstanding features; the outstanding feature is services for Looked After Children
- The Director of Children's Services is retiring and her successor will be in post later in Spring.
- Adult Social Care is due to have a CQC inspection later in the year.
- Since the last Assembly a new highway contractor has been appointed: Balfour Beatty.
- Approximately 4,000 potholes had been mended in the first two months of the year with many more gangs than usual being used.

Cllr. Kathryn Field  
March 2024

# **RDC ANNUAL REPORT TO MOUNTFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**APRIL 2024**

## **January 2023**

The Council started the new year by urging residents and businesses to take part in a budget consultation, as the authority continued to face increasing demands on its finances.

A new requirement for voters to show photo ID when they vote was highlighted. Residents were warned the new rule would apply for the first time in the May 2023 local elections.

January ended with some fantastic news, as the authority was told it had been awarded over £19 million for community, creativity, and skills in Bexhill. The investment, from the Government's Levelling Up Fund would be used to support two major projects at the De La Warr Pavilion and in Sidley.

## **February**

This month the Council highlighted its work to keep the district tidy with the removal of unsightly graffiti at several sites, and by encouraging smokers to dispose of cigarette butts in the right way. The Council also promoted its green credentials with the launch of a new energy improvement project for village and community halls across the district.

Cabinet met at the end of the month to agree items including community grants of more than £40,000 for groups in Battle, Burwash, Icklesham and Staplecross, the extension of a contract for Citizens Advice with £85,000 of additional funding, and progress being made on the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

## **March**

In March, the Council launched a special £10,000 grant for community groups looking to celebrate the Kings Coronation in May. Further good news was the confirmation that the district had been chosen as one of 20 new Levelling Up Partnership areas and would benefit from a share of the £400m UK fund.

This month also saw the authority addressing some difficult issues. The Council continued its negotiations on the devolvement of public conveniences to town and parish councils and issued a joint statement with East Sussex County Council on the Government's proposed plan to use the Northeys site as a centre for people seeking asylum.

## **April**

The forthcoming May elections took centre stage with another step in the process ahead of residents going to the polls. The authority published its 'Statement of Persons Nominated for the District & Parish Elections' online allowing people to check those standing in each ward.

It was another example of the work of the authority promoting the elections which has included the election timetable, including deadlines for registering to vote and voting by post, plus Photo ID needed in polling stations, and the LGA debate not hate campaign.

The Council also kicked off its annual work to promote safety, protection of the environment, and respect for local communities at Camber and along the rest of the district's coast.

## **May**

The District Council and Parish Council elections took place on Thursday 4 May and results were announced at the election count held at the De La Warr Pavilion on Friday 5 May. On the day of the count, the Council published results as they came in on its website and on social media.

## **June**

In June, the issue of public open spaces was on the agenda. The Council launched a consultation on proposed changes to dog controls in public spaces and highlighted the need for budget savings with proposals to change grounds maintenance.

The issue of Northeye again came up this month, with Council Leader Doug Oliver releasing a statement to confirm that the Government had changed its plans and would not be opening the proposed centre in September 2023 but the plans remain on the table.

The Council's Cabinet met and approved items including continuing with the enforcement of certain environmental offences - such as dog-fouling and littering. Cabinet also confirmed the Council's Net Zero pledge and its membership of UK100 – a network of UK local authorities who have pledged to reach Net Zero by 2030.

## **July**

The Council helped to celebrate the completion of 15 new affordable homes for local people in Icklesham. The Council joined Hastoe Housing Association, the Icklesham Parish Community Land Trust, Icklesham Parish Council, Sussex Community Housing Hub and other partners to mark the project.

Egerton Park in Bexhill was again recognised as one of the country's best parks for the eleventh consecutive year.

## **August**

Lorna Ford was confirmed as the Council's new Chief Executive. The Council welcomed its first cohort of energy champions – volunteers who will train others to reduce their energy bills and save money. August also saw the Council continuing its work to maintain the

electoral register by asking residents across the district to check their details and ensure they do not miss out when it comes to voting in local elections.

### **September**

There was good news for people in the Rye area this month with the announcement that Rye Pool was set to reopen in October. The Council and its partners had worked tirelessly to make the facility available again for local people after soaring energy costs forced its closure in 2022.

Community groups and projects in Battle, Bexhill and Winchelsea were among the beneficiaries of the latest round of District Council community grants with close to £20,000 being handed out. A local eyesore in Bexhill got a welcome makeover as National Highways confirmed it had completed the Ravenside roundabout improvements.

### **October**

In October, due to budget savings, the Council introduced a trial closure of public toilets over the winter months in Battle, Bexhill, Pett Level, Sedlescombe and Rye. The Council took the decision as it faced a £3.8 million shortfall in its budget.

At its Cabinet meeting, the authority discussed various issues including the Council Tax Support Fund, cash payments in car parks, dog controls, and CCTV cameras.

The month also saw the authority highlight its work to get people of all ages active and healthy. The Council promoted a national rugby play programme called Rugby tots for pre-school and primary school aged children to take part in rugby-themed activities.

### **November**

The Council launched a wide-ranging consultation on its budget situation. Using all its communication channels, the authority urged residents and businesses to have their say on how the Council manages its finances as soaring costs and extra demands for services help to create a £3.8m funding gap.

Towards the end of the month, the Council started its annual 'Love Local' campaign, urging people to shop and eat locally in the run up to Christmas. The campaign, which includes input from businesses themselves was boosted with the announcement that once again free parking would be available on set days in council-run car parks during the festive period.

### **December**

The last month of the year saw continued activity on Rother's budget consultation and Love Local campaigns, and at a Cabinet meeting councillors discussed the Council's Climate Strategy and how its aims would be implemented over the coming months and years. At the same meeting, cabinet members were told that the authority had received £76,000 from DEFRA's Coronation Living Heritage Fund, for tree planting, community orchards and biodiversity work across the district.

### **And so far in 2024 the Council has...**

- Announced £300,000 rural business grant
- Held a Rother Housing event attended by 80 industry and partner delegates
- Completed a successful budget consultation resulting in over 700 responses
- Set its budget with £15m to be spent on services and a 2.99% council tax rise
- Agreed to hold consultations on both the Local Plan and on anti-social behaviour on beaches
- Announced the latest round of community grants with £66,000 for projects in Bexhill, Crowhurst, Icklesham and Three Oakes

### **And finally...**

The authority is also looking forward to highlighting its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024!



# Mountfield

VILLAGE HALL

The village hall committee are pleased to report that the 2023/24 year has shown a significant improvement from the previous year when we had to call an emergency meeting last April after a deficit of over £4,000 arose from a combination of lower hire income after Covid and increased electricity costs.

This year we report a small deficit, but have improved hall hire income by 37% and have managed to keep expenses down to a minimum. We received lots of good ideas from residents at the emergency meeting, and feel that our new facebook page, hire posters on the roadside and improved google map information have helped to make people much more aware of the hall.

The committee continue to organise the very successful annual village bonfire and fireworks event in November, and the Children's Christmas Party with 30 local children aged 0-11 attending.

On 8 June 2024 we are organising the 'Rubicol Musical Megafest' at the hall with live bands playing lots of different types of music throughout the day, with bbq, bar, tea and cakes, and kids games and activities. This is a celebration of the lives of Ruby Willis and Colin Harmer, who contributed so much to the village over many years.

We have made some improvements to the structure of the hall this year with the acquisition of a storage container to allow us to clear little used items out the hall, thanks to a grant from Mountfield Parish Council. We are currently putting in more ceiling insulation with a grant from Rother District Council's Village Halls Energy Project.

We look forward to 2024/5 with some optimism, and hope to continue the good progress of last year. Thanks to Mountfield Parish Council, Rother District Council, British Gypsum and residents for supporting us, and please continue to do so, so that we can keep this important village resource alive and well into the long term.

Grateful thanks must go to Peter Miles who has recently resigned from the committee, after stepping in at a difficult time 3 years ago as Chairman. New committee members or just volunteer helpers are always welcome, so if you can spare a bit of time please contact me on 07802 703708 or at [mountfieldvh@gmail.com](mailto:mountfieldvh@gmail.com).

Neil Whines  
Acting Chairman

April 2024

## Mountfield Footpath Warden's Report April 2024

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We continue to walk a good many of the Parish footpaths on a weekly basis

through all seasons despite weather conditions.

Our aim is to check for fallen trees, broken stiles/ Gates and any deliberate blockage

reference to the land owner. If needed we report back to East Sussex Rights of way Team with footpath and (furniture Stile/Gate numbers.

Our local Rambling clubs - Battle ,Bexhill and Rother all use your paths on a regular basis doing a grand job of keeping them clear and open. They would also report any problems they come across. We are pleased to say the East Sussex Rangers have been working on footpath no 27

Which runs from the 2100 across to Eatenden Lane.

This had been previously completely blocked by the land owners for a long time.

The Rangers have reinstated the Stile ,cut through the wood and placed a few finger posts. It isn't an easy walking path and not often used. But at last it's open to all.

Please if you're out walking and come across a problem ,do let us know and we'll go take a look.

Regards

June Simpson

Lynne George

## 2023 Chairmans Speech – MCC

2023 started with covid becoming a distant memory, and apprehension was in the ranks for the start of the season.... However, the latest curve ball to come our way was the weather.... Our traditional first game with Ashburnham consisted of Bernie and I messaging each other, not about the amazing wickets we were preparing but how we could not even get a mower onto the wicket without leaving ruts and groves everywhere.

The weather did not play ball as our first 3 games were cancelled however, we eventually got underway with a win against Robertsbridge on the 21<sup>st</sup> May. This fine start was then followed by 2 subsequent cancellations due to availability before the season finally got underway.....

Our final stats for the season were:

Played	13
Won	9
Lost	3
Draw	1
Weather Cancellation	5
Cancelled for our availability	1
Cancelled for other availability	2 (Westfield & Sedlescombe)

Again we were lucky enough to have the opportunity to field lots of different players to represent the MCC which is always pleasing with more of a 'youth' influx being catered for... I hope to see some junior Tidmarsh's, Towse's and Marchant's at the MCG..!

Lot of great performances which I will pick up upon at the MCC dinner when Wiggy has arranged it, but one which sticks in the mind is Snowy's innings in our last game at Northiam, normally this is a humbling defeat but it was great to watch Snowy smash them around the park for his 89..!

Clubwise I would like to thank Mike & Wiggy for their continued support of the club, and would like to welcome Bash as our newly elected President. Considering the weather last year, the ground has looked amazing due to the work at the ground... Wiggy's stripes are improving which is always pleasing to see.

EOS renovations have continued to improve the square, and I can confirm when I looked at it today it is still v wet. This has also given the opportunity for players to also play on Saturdays which has I feel generally improved the ability of our players. I am still coaching on Monday night for the kids which is proving v rewarding.

This year we will also be playing competitive games against Catsfield, Crowhurst, Ashburnham & Brightling as part of the village tournament. This is not 35 over cricket but provides the ability to play for a win of course, but a draw if need be, for me this is a skill not to be overlooked as I have personally been involved in many last wicket stands to get us over the line..!

I am looking forward to seeing Pav's continual evolution of the Defensive stroke.

### Off the Pitch

I am speaking to the Parish Council for the season around maintenance, toilet block emptying, Rubbish bins, mowers and hedges.... So I will be at the meeting with them in march to discuss, and I will arrange a day at the MCG when conditions allow for us all to



help with getting the ground ready for the season (and many thanks to MPCC for their continued support).

Finally, I would like to mention Tubby Morris who sadly passed away last year. Tubby was one of those people who were linked to the MCC in one role for life, whether as a player, Captain, Chairman, Fixture Secretary, Life Vice President and Groundsman... Cherry and I have had many conversations on the historical mower selection which was good. This year, the Jubilee match is on the 1<sup>st</sup> September and I would like to make that a celebration of Tubby aswell, in addition we will work with Cherry, Celia and the family on a bench at the MCG in his honour... details to follow. Many thanks for your support in 2023, and I am looking forward to 2024 but with a smearing of Sun Block on my nose..! cant think why that gets more sun..?

## Mountfield football club report

This season Mountfield football club competed in Division 3 of the East Sussex football league and entered into 3 Cup competitions.

On the 14-11-23 we lost 1-3 to Hawkhurst united first team in the Macron store Hastings Cup.

On the 02-11-23 we lost to Catsfield in the Robertsbridge Charity Cup first round.

On the 13-01-24 we lost to Battle Town development team 0-1 after extra time in the ESFL Challenge Cup divisions three/ four.

In Division 3 so far we have played 14 games and Won 3 Drawn 4 and Lost 7. Today we have only 12 points. We had one point deducted for fielding a eligible player. We are now bottom of Division 3 with only 2 games left to play so it's likely we will be relegated next season to Division 4.

This season we had 30 players registered to play for Mountfield but due to work / family commitments and injuries we found that the team varies from week to week with one or two subs available.

The bad weather has played havoc with arranging fixtures with some games being cancelled due to waterlogged and frozen pitches.

At Mountfield we had one game abandoned due to a frozen pitch and a bad injury to one of our players.

Unfortunately our pitch at Mountfield due to the wet weather as become really waterlogged and unplayable so we have had to arrange our home game's to be played at Robertsbridge secondary school. We also had one home game switched to our oppositions pitch.

We have 2 more games left to play, one game on the 09-04-25 in the evening against Ticehurst and then the final game against Catsfield on the 20-04-24

We hope to continue to have a team next season as we have a balance of older and keen younger players in the squad and the manager is also keen to carry on.

Special thanks to the Salehurst Halt pub for drinks and food after the game where the team returns to after the home games.

Hope next seasons results will be better along with the weather.

Nigel McDonagh Mountfield united f.c



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## Report from B.A.C.T. – April 2024

1. Buses & vehicle maintenance. We continue running our three Treka-built Sprinter minibuses, the oldest now being 19 years old. Jempsons Commercials ceased trading earlier in the year, meaning the servicing of our vehicles has had to be transferred to Ridge West Garage. We still hope to raise more funds to enable the purchase of a newer second-hand replacement vehicle.
2. Services. Our Hail & Ride services (B67-B79) have been affected by roadworks and closures in Battle, Netherfield & Sedlescombe (see item 5). Our Flexible bus services (B80-B90) have been impacted by both low demand and driver shortages. These are now under review as demand for services into Rye & Kent is low.
3. B67 to B79 Passenger numbers. Our Hail & Ride passenger numbers are around 75% of pre-covid levels. Single ticket numbers for the 2023/24 year were 4,862.
4. Drivers & recruitment. We have recently recruited two new volunteer drivers. However, two of our regulars are still side-lined with health or driving licence issues.
5. Roadworks/closures. We have encountered issues with lengthy roadworks/road closures impacting our services. Netherfield Hill has been closed off for a significant period. Sedlescombe is also being disrupted for works by Southern Gas Networks. Most recently, a closure of the A2100 London Road has caused a lengthy diversion.
6. Operational funding. Our main source of operational funds come from an East Sussex grant. However, as they have started operating their "FlexiBus" service, this has come with a substantial financial outlay, posing a risk to our future funding.

**Battle Area Community Transport**

The Messenger magazine is in good shape financially. About 400 copies are delivered by hand to subscribers in the four villages of Brightling, Dallington, Mountfield and Netherfield.

Following the retirement of Mel Willis-Fleming from the role of editor, we now have a system of "village editors" - one or two for each of the four villages. The village editor for Mountfield is Neil Whines and all contributions to be considered for inclusion should be emailed to him using the address [mountfield.messenger@gmail.com](mailto:mountfield.messenger@gmail.com) The local news from each village is the core of the magazine, and we are totally reliant on you, the readers, to send in information about your village.

We would also welcome anyone who wants to get more involved with the management of the magazine. Our committee meets about 4 times per year, to set the overall direction of the magazine. Please email [darwell.messenger@gmail.com](mailto:darwell.messenger@gmail.com) if you are interested.