



Salehurst & Robertsbridge Parish Council

NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 Issue 2

Spring 2008

Do you have something you want to say about your group?

We are happy to try to publicise it for you - send to the Clerk or Chairman

Dates for your diary 2008

Parish Council Meeting
10th March 2008
Robertsbridge Hall

Planning Meeting
11th April 2008
Youth Centre

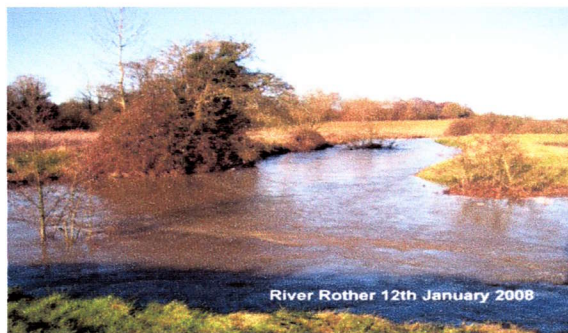
Annual Assembly
14th April 2008
Robertsbridge Hall

Parish Council Meeting
12th May 2008
Robertsbridge Hall

All meetings start at 7.30 pm and a period of up to 15 minutes is allowed at the start of the meeting for public comment or questions if required.

Agendas for meetings are posted on the parish notice boards and web site at least 3 days before the meeting—planning applications are available for inspection at the parish office during normal opening times or on the Rother District Council web site - www.rother.gov.uk and you can comment on planning applications on-line

Not quite “pulled back from the brink of disaster” as the press would have it but, on Tuesday 15th January Robertsbridge again came close to flooding.



River Rother 12th January 2008

With the river already full and ground saturated, continuous rainfall for several hours caused concern. The Environment Agency were on hand for more than 24 hours and by 9pm were getting ready to install the flood gates across the roads and seal off the

flood defences but fortunately the rain had stopped earlier in the evening and by 11pm the river had stopped rising and it was not necessary to close the gates.

Fields were flooded and it is almost certain that low lying areas in the village, such as Rutley Close which in the past have frequently flooded, would have done so this time without the flood bunds which were installed after the floods of 2000. Some low lying areas of the village were affected by surface water run off but thanks to the efforts of Councillor Sue Prochak and Paul Tickner and other Rother staff in helping these residents with sand bags, major problems were averted. Thanks are due to them and our Parish Clerk for their efforts and, of course, to the Environment Agency staff whose efficiency and professionalism goes a long way to reassure residents.

Some residents have asked who decides about initiating the flood defence operations and some newcomers have asked what the flood defences consist of. On the next pages there are brief details of these matters but if you are interested then there is a full copy of the operational plans at the Parish Office which can be viewed during normal opening times.



Many residents will be familiar with our PCSO Tina Grevett (seen here at the Christmas Capers evening) and the excellent job she is doing in the community. It is good to know that this is also recognised by her employers, Sussex Police, and she has received a framed Divisional Certificate of Congratulations from her Inspector for her work ‘...over and above her role as a PCSO’ - well done Tina, much deserved!

Community Support Officer: contact details
tinamarie.grevett@sussex.pnn.police.uk 07810 656 247

What is the Parish Council doing about.....? In each issue of the newsletter we try to focus on one aspect of the parish council's responsibilities.

Housing needs - In the survey done recently for the Local Action Plan, what came out clearly was that whilst residents do not, in general, want any more development, there may be a need for some 'low cost affordable housing' for village young people and 'retirement accommodation' for our more elderly residents, who may like the opportunity to move from a dwelling which has become too large for them.

The Parish Council is planning to conduct a Housing Needs Survey in the Parish. This will take the form of a short questionnaire, which the Council would be grateful if you could take the time to complete when it arrives. The survey comprises two parts. The first part of the questionnaire is for all residents to complete and the second part is for those who have a housing need, including people who currently live away from Salehurst and Robertsbridge, and would like to return to live in the parish.

The survey is being undertaken, and paid for, by

Action in Rural Sussex, which is an independent organization that liaises with Parish Councils, District Councils and Housing Associations. The aim of the survey is to find out what, if any, type of housing is needed within the parish and how best it can be provided, for example, starter homes for younger people and housing more suitable for older people. The questions on the form are compiled by Action in Rural Sussex and follow a standard format, which is used to assess housing need in all rural areas.

The results of the housing survey will be summarized on the Parish Council notice boards and on the website. Based on the information in the survey and depending on the results, the Parish Council will explore the potential to provide a small 'low cost affordable housing' development and 'retirement accommodation' specifically for local people in the parish. It can also be of help in formulating decisions when planning applications are received by the Parish and District Councils

Mill Site – In July, the developers acting for the owners of the mill site presented their proposals for a mixed development of this site at a public exhibition in the village. The proposal was for 55 new dwellings, conversion of the former mill building to 11 apartments, conversion of the listed oast house into 2 dwellings and for new commercial space. In addition, a new doctors surgery and a dentist's surgery were planned. In line with Rother District planning rules, 40% of the new residential units would be 'affordable housing' which means controlled by a Housing Association.



A full planning application was then submitted and the Parish Council held another display of the plans on a Saturday morning to give those who had not been able to attend the previous exhibition a chance to comment. The Parish Council considered the application at a special meeting and decided that whilst they were not opposed in principle to the re-development of the site they were concerned about the ratio of residential to commercial space and the traffic considerations and therefore recommended refusal. Since then Rother District Council have been discussing with the developers details of the proposals but the developers have indicated that because they feel they are not going to reach agreement from Rother they will launch an appeal against Rother's Non-Determination of the plans i.e. because they have not given a decision within the statutory time.

If this happens then the whole decision will be taken out of Rother's hands and a decision will be made by an Inspector appointed by the Government's Planning Inspectorate and, there will almost certainly be a public enquiry - it looks as if it will be many months now before a decision is made on this site.

The flood defences - Following the disastrous flooding of the village in October 2000 a concerted campaign by Parish, District and County Councillors, together with the local MP resulted in money being made available by the Government for a flood defence system for Robertsbridge which was completed in 2004.

The defences are made up of a combination of earth bunds and concrete walls, which can be seen along Station Road, and in the fields on either side of the Clappers; demountable flood walls (stop-logs) located on The Clappers, Station Road and at Gray-Nicolls and a number of mobile pumps designed to pump surface water that might become trapped behind the defences. *See opposite for what happens when there is a flood alert.*

New Lights for Old - Recently the Parish Clerk was asked why the Council was replacing street lights that appeared in good order and why they were not replaced with 'traditional' swan-neck style lamp heads. Please be reassured that the Parish Council does not replace lamps unnecessarily! All our street lamps are subject to an annual inspection and regrettably they reach a stage where they are no longer serviceable and we have an annual programme of refurbishments and replacements to maintain the lighting at the existing levels.

The new lamps are very much more efficient than the old ones, both in terms of energy use and maintenance and they are also designed to be much more 'directional' and therefore cause less light pollution. Sadly, it is not possible to fit the new lamps to the old brackets so replacing them with a more traditional 'swan neck' type is extremely expensive. To do so would mean a very large increase in the PC precept (charged with our council tax). Running and maintaining the 95 street lamps throughout the village already accounts for a substantial part of our budget.

The usual type of bulb fitted is orange but the PC has always maintained white lights as they fit better with our rural setting. Occasionally however the contractors make a mistake and we then ask for them to be changed. The PC strives to maintain our rural appearance and attempts to prevent the village becoming too 'urbanised'.

Flood Warning Alerts

The process of mobilisation to deal with a flood emergency is initiated in a number of stages in order both to be fully prepared for flooding at Robertsbridge and to ensure that resources are deployed as necessary around the region to cope with region wide emergencies. Responsibilities and deployments at each stage are outlined below:

<i>Alert Status</i>	<i>Responsibility for Initiating Alert</i>	<i>Staff and Equipment Deployments</i>
Flood Watch	Combined decision EDO's, ODO's & FWDO's	Staff to move pumps & lighting equipment to flood emergency locations. Warn professional partners.
Flood Warning	ODO	Deploy personnel & equipment. Commence overpumping. Deploy demountable barriers (stop-logs). Prepare gates/barriers for closure. Make ready road closure signs. Deploy Incident Control Point (mobile headquarters). Check communications systems. Notify professional partners. Check emergency staff availability.
Severe Flood Warning	EDO	Erect all road signs and inform professional partners. Close all gates and barriers. Ensure all pumps running and penstocks & flap valves closed. Monitor defences. Flood teams in communication with Incident Control Point.
All Clear	EDO	In accordance with barrier opening and post flood operations procedures

EDO Emergency Duty Officer
 ODO Operational Duty Officer
 FWDO Flood Warning Duty Officer

A total of 12 Environment Agency staff are on duty in Robertsbridge once a Flood Warning is issued.

SALEHURST & ROBERTSBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council:

Mrs Karen Ripley

The Parish Office
Robertsbridge Youth Centre
The Grove, George Hill
Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5AP

Phone: 01580 882066

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Email: clerk@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Web address:

www.salehurst-pc.org.uk or
www.robertsbridge-pc.org.uk

The Parish Office is open to the public at the following times:

Tuesday	9am to 11am
Thursday	2pm to 4pm

Rother District Council

Web address:

www.rother.gov.uk

Parish Councillors Tel:

Cllr David Allen (Chairman) 881056
chairman@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Cllr Neil Barden 880457
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Cllr Gillian Smith 880810
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Cllr Tamara Strapp 881291
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East Sussex County Councillor

Cllr Peter Jones
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Rother District Councillors

Cllr George Hearn 819233
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Cllr Susan Prochak 881309
cllr.susan.prochak@rother.gov.uk

Councillor Michael Rix

It was with very great sadness that we learned of the death of Michael Rix on 2nd December 2007. Mike had been unwell in hospital for some time.

Born in Sussex, Mike and his family had lived in Robertsbridge for 27 years and he had a keen interest in the village and particularly in planning and development. He joined the Parish Council as a co-opted member in 2003 and was subsequently re-elected for a second term in May 2007 when he also was elected as vice-Chairman - a role he carried out with dedication.

Mike was an active and valued member of the Council, serving on several committees including Planning and the Local Action Plan Group and represented the Council in matters relating to crime and disorder - he will be greatly missed.

Parish Annual Assembly Monday 14th April 2008 Robertsbridge Hall 6.30 for 7.30pm

Once again we extend an invitation to all village groups to attend the Annual Assembly and give a brief - 5 minutes max! - summary of their years activities. This is a good way to let others in the village, especially newcomers, know what you are doing and what is available.

We are also hoping this year to make the evening a bit more interesting by offering organisations a table on which information can be displayed and where residents can talk informally to the organisations. We would also offer refreshments!

If you would like to contribute please contact the Clerk in advance so that she can programme the meeting, or just come along to find out what others are doing!

Friends of Robertsbridge

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

A number of initiatives are being organised to improve/tidy up the village including Autumn planting for bulbs, a litter pick in Pipers Lane and setting up a Working group for Christmas lights. First on the agenda is the Annual Village Clean-up which is being organised for **Sunday 9th March**. Full details of this will be publicised nearer the date but hopefully as many as possible will join in.

If you are interested in helping in any or all of these events your support will be most welcome. For more information contact Lynn Lewis on 881818