Battle Parish Assembly 2022

The following notes summarise the proceedings at the Assembly held on 23rd April 2022 at the Battle & Langton CE School, Market Road, Battle at 6.00pm.

Approximately 70 attendees plus County and Town Councillors. The Town Clerk took the notes.

Cllr Glenna Favell, Chairman of Battle Town Council welcomed everyone to the meeting and hoped that the various stands had provided interesting information about what is going on in our community. She reminded members of the public that the Parish Assembly is not a Council meeting, but rather a gathering of electors that is facilitated by the Town Council.

Cllr Favell paid tribute to a previous recipient of the Community Award, Mr **Robert Emeleus,** who passed away earlier this week. It was noted that he was a perfect gentleman and a former Mayor who would be greatly missed. This was greatly endorsed by those present.

Citation and Community Awards
Cllr Favell welcomed Cllr Vikki Cook, Vice-Chairman of Battle Town Council, to record the nominations to some very special people within the community.

Cllr Cook expressed the Council's thanks and appreciation to **Steve and Ariel Booth**, whose prompt response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in setting up the "Battle Beats Coronavirus" Facebook group ensured that many of our vulnerable, housebound and lonely residents could receive shopping, medication or a friendly phone call.
The volunteers who were enrolled and inspired by them enabled the work to be continued under the umbrella of the Town Council during the following months of lockdown.
The Chairman presented Steve and Ariel with a Special Citation.

As the Parish Assembly had been cancelled last year due to the pandemic, two Community Awards were presented.

The Chairman presented the **2021 Award** went to **Sue Burton**, whose tireless work over several years resulted in the installation of the all-weather pathway and cycle skills area in the Recreation Ground. She led the fund-raising efforts for the community contribution that was key to successful applications for grant funding. With the arrival of Covid-19, the facility was of huge benefit to our community.

Mike Clarke, received the **2022 Award** from Cllr Favell for his involvement in many community activities including Battle's Christmas lights, which until recently were managed solely by volunteers. He continues to organise the weekly WI Country Market, a monthly lunch club for senior citizens and is Chairman of the Battle Memorial Hall Committee. As a member of the Battle Muffin Club Mike has not only become involved with the fund-raising activities of the Club which benefit the local community, but also further afield.

Guest speakers
Unfortunately, the speaker from Rother Voluntary Action was unable to attend. County and District Cllr Kathryn Field had kindly agreed to speak about Climate Awareness.

Cllr Kathryn Field - Climate Change
Some background information on the Agreements, aims and how carbon neutrality will be achieved was reported. The targets of 2050 by East Sussex County Council and 2030 by Rother District Council(RDC) by

2030 was noted. This will be by offsetting any carbon emissions by means currently being developed eg biomass energy, afforestation.
It was suggested that whilst most people like to be warm, the potential that increase in global temperatures may be harming the longer-term food production and security should be considered. Although the size of the task may be daunting, the "think global act local" applies: individual actions, however small, adds up to make real impact.
It was highlighted that one tonne of CO2 is roughly:

- 40 return trips to Shoreham by car
- 1 passenger flying from Gatwick to Chicago
- Burning 1-2 bath tubs of crude oil

RDC declared its target in 2019 and has been working towards this in a variety of ways.
Cllr Field confirmed that she is aware that the Town Council is also committed to the protection of the environment and suggested some measures that might be considered including addition of beehives and bus stops with green roofs.
Finally, she suggested that residents could help by:

- cultivating wildlife friendly gardens;
- insulating homes to 300mm;
- using green power;
- installing solar panels;
- using pan lids when cooking;
- lowering heating thermostats.

In response to questions, Cllr Field reported:

- that there had been no planning applications received to date for onshore windfarms in the Battle area;
- repairs to footways (pedestrian paths by roadways) must fit a criterion of size and depth before repairs are instructed. She confirmed that tenders are being sought and it is hoped that a new contract might have a lower threshold for repair;
- to her knowledge, planning permission is not required for solar panels if the house is not listed or in the Conservation area. She suggested that the Planning Authority be asked prior to any installation.

Adrian Gaylon, Sports Development Officer, Rother District Council
Mr Gaylon highlighted that his role is to encourage sports and activities for the community. He reported that this included assisting clubs and organisations to obtain relevant qualification to train teams. It was acknowledged that a healthy body and mind was important from an early age into older age. The benefit of the social aspect of exercise was emphasised. The walking sports available in Battle were highlighted.
A Leisure Facility Strategy is currently being developed to ensure all targets and goals for making the most of spaces and places in the community are identified.
Mr Gaylon highlighted volunteers are often required, not only to carry out the sport activity, but also to carry out tasks such as treasurer.
A short video was shown that highlighted Active Rother events.

In response to questions, Mr Gaylon reported:

- the high number of inactive residents in Rother is likely to be due to the demographics; the number of inactive juniors/young people in Rother is no worse than other areas;
- whilst it is acknowledged that there is a distance to travel for swimming activities, there is no current plan to provide a swimming pool in the Battle area.

The use of Battle Health Pathway for the Battle Town Football Club's Couch to 5K runs and other uses was highlighted.
A weekly Battle Health Walk on Fridays from Abbey Green at 10am was noted.

Modern Slavery – Sussex Police – unable to attend.

Cllr Favell reported additional information:

- there will be a **Guided Walk in the Cemetery on 14th May at 1pm, focussing on trees**. A free event with refreshments in the Ceremonies Room from 12.30;
- to celebrate the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Jubilation in the Square** will take place in the afternoon of **Thursday 2nd June**. All residents are invited to the Market Square from 1.45 to enjoy entertainment from a variety of community groups. Picnics - and an umbrella if it is wet were encouraged. There will be a sing-along finale at about 4.30 for which Union flags, song sheets and kazoos will be distributed;
- that evening, at **Kingsmead at 9.30pm, the new beacon will be lit at 9.45pm** when beacons around the country will be lit to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee;
- the **Battle in Bloom competition** will be organised soon. Details will be publicised shortly;
- the title of this year's **writing competition** will also be announced soon;
- the Council has entered the **town and the cemetery into the South & South East in Bloom(S&SEiB) competition** this year. Judging will take place on Thursday 7th July, so a special effort to get the town looking pristine will be made;
- a short video encouraging **residents to put themselves forward as Councillors** was shown. Anybody wishing to discuss this should contact the Town Clerk or existing Councillors for information.

Open Forum

Following a statement in the Council's Annual Report that an increase in its precept above 3% may be required, a request was made to retain a previous undertaking that a consultation would take place prior to this increase; particularly in light of the current cost of living crisis. The Chairman confirmed that Council continues to fully discuss the precept with the aim to keep to a minimum increase. However, if it is felt necessary for rise above 3%, Council will endeavour to reach as many residents as possible via website, social media, Newsletter and notice boards for comments.

The dramatic increase in graffiti in the town, giving a disgraceful impression was highlighted. A Police arrest was reported and this is a subject consistently raised with the local PCSOs for attention. Other potential solutions are being discussed by Council.

The Clerk reported frustrating delays to the completion of the Almonry and continued closure of the rear garden are due to additional works, lack of materials and a contract dispute. She reported that works to complete the original contract will be restarted on 3rd May. The outstanding works are primarily the resurfacing of the reduced slope access, installation of a platform lift and completion of an internal accessible toilet facility. As with a majority of large projects, there is also a list of defects to be rectified. At present there is no definitive completion date, but a full programme of works should be available when the Contractor returns to the Almonry. In conjunction with the wonderful Beautiful Battle volunteers, it had been agreed that concentration on the front garden and the town centre should be made for this season. This would ensure the S&SEiB judges would be presented with wonderful town displays and provide time for the works to the Almonry building to be completed prior to the proposed extensive refurbishment of the rear garden. It was noted that the opening of the Battle Museum is not due to the Almonry works.

In relation to the Almonry budget, the Clerk confirmed that, prior to a payment of £88,835.13 to facilitate the return of the main Contractor following the contractual dispute, the budget had not been exceeded although there had been additional works in excess of the tender identified eg roof works and three phase electrical supply which will be paid from Ear Marked Reserves. A discovery that the chimney in the traditional Clerk's Office is not properly reinforced will require remedying. This will be at additional cost. This area of the Almonry and the courtyard will remain closed until this work is complete. The costs for

this have not been identified. As a majority of the work is complete, it is hoped that no further issues will be uncovered.

The Chairman confirmed that the rebuild of the Pavilion, to include a community refreshment area, at an approximate cost of £750,000 is ongoing.
The Clerk reported that at every Council meeting a monthly income and expenditure report is provided and at all Committee meetings a full budget report is presented. These are all available on the Council's website. The total amount spent on the Almonry project may be found with the Finance & General Purposes Committee minutes: reference Almonry (110) Projects (4800). Payments to end of February to the contractor £540,920 and professional fees: surveys; structural and mechanical engineers; quantity surveyor(QS); architect/project manager etc £98,615. Additional costs attributed to the project include relocation of Officers during the main works and storage of furniture. The QS had suggested an outstanding figure of approximately £10,000 although this will not be confirmed until the project is complete. It was noted that costs of materials had increased exponentially over the last two years. It was highlighted that the QS examines all requests for payment prior to invoice being agreed. It is currently suggested that an overpayment of £88,835.13 has been made.

Cllr Howell confirmed that the Planning Inspector had removed three of four proposed Green Gaps; only Marley Lane remains. She highlighted that approximately thirty Green Spaces remain and, as Battle Civil Parish is within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a great deal more protection is afforded. It was noted that new large developments include green spaces.

In response to concerns at heavy traffic through Battle, the Chairman confirmed that once the Queensway link is complete, the Council will be working on an attempt to have the A2100 declassified between the ten sixty-six roundabout and Bannatynes' roundabout. It is hoped that this will reduce heavy traffic passing through Battle.

Cllr Field confirmed that road markings are due a refresh but that, although lines may not be apparent, the Traffic Regulation Order remains valid. Cllr Cook reported that contact details for the parking enforcement team are available. A member of the public stated that her complaints had received a different response. It was noted that there are eight wardens in the District.

It was suggested that the replacement Town Council website contains errors in information and is significantly more difficult to navigate.

Cllr Field reported that complaints at the poor surface of the North Trade Road, particularly close to the Police Station, had been made to East Sussex Highways, but is assured that the road is structurally strong and will be repaired in accordance with Highway's Policy.

A concern that there is no warning signage at the junction of North Trade Road and Tollgates, despite the large number of additional developments at both sites, could potentially cause an accident. It was confirmed that this had been raised at the planning stage but that it would be raised again upon completion of the building works.

In bringing the Assembly to a close Cllr Favell thanked all present for their attendance and wished all a very good evening.

There being no further matters, the meeting closed at 7.22pm.