Battle Parish Assembly 2025

The following notes summarise the proceedings at the Assembly held on 23 April 2025 at Battle Memorial Hall, High Street, Battle at 7pm.

Approximately 80 attendees plus T Leggo (East Sussex Association of Local Councils), A Vallance (Rother District Council), Ch Insp S Yates (Sussex Police), County, District and Town Councillors. Chairman of Battle Town Council, Cllr A Barton, Chairman of the meeting, Town Clerk C Harris took the notes.

Cllr Andrew Barton, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Saxonwood WI for providing refreshments.

Michael Hodge, Chairman of Battle Memorial Hall, pointed out the emergency exits and thanked the Town Council for its continued partnership with the Hall, that not only provides several spaces for hire but also hosts the memorial to the war dead in its foyer.

Cllr Barton highlighted that it is not a Council meeting, but a gathering of electors facilitated by the Council. He introduced Trevor Leggo (ESALC), Andrew Vallence (RDC), Ch Insp Simon Yates (Sussex Policy), County Cllr Kathryn Field, who is also a District Councillor, and District Cllrs Sue Burton and Vikki Cook who are both also Town Councillors. The Chairman reported that the meeting will be recorded to aid the production of the notes of the meeting.

The volunteer groups that were represented at the community event prior to the formal meeting, and those that were unable to attend, were thanked for their efforts throughout the town. Residents were reminded that additional volunteers are welcomed and thanks were recorded to those volunteers that had passed away in the previous year, including Mike Clarke, Andy Holter and Tony Perkins.

The notes from the meeting held on 17 April 2024 were accepted as a true record.

Cllr Barton introduced a new member of Council, Nicola McLaren and highlighted that there remains one vacancy. He thanked all the volunteers within the community that made such a difference to the town. He highlighted the many people that assisted Council with the: Tourist Information Point; Almonry Gardens; Cemetery; lovely garden at Cherry Gardens allotment site; various Task & Finish Groups and Sub Committees to ensure that projects are completed successfully.

Awards

The Chairman reported that two Councillors: Sue Burton and Dale Wheeler had undertaken a sponsored Pavilion (Battle) to Pavilion (Brighton) cycle ride, raising £2044, and Battle Town Football Club had arranged a 24hour sponsored run around the rec on the weekend of Storm Darragh, raising a further £4,400 for the Pavilion rebuild project. Cllrs Burton and Wheeler and Gary Walsh, on behalf of the BTFC were presented with a Certificate of thanks for their contributions.

Cllr Barton reported that 12 nominations by a record number of people had been received for the Battle Civil Parish **Community Award** to recognise the particular part or role a group, or an individual, have made to the lives of those who Live, Work or Visit Battle. Council considered all the excellent nominations and finally decided on the winner, June Simpson. Cllr Barton highlighted her leadership of several walking groups, activities to support conservation and community gardening projects, and assistance for several other local organisations to ensure existing and newcomers to Battle are welcomed.

Presentation by Battle Youth Forum

Several members of the youth forum spoke on their experiences of learning how local government works and the valuable visit to Parliament, organised by the Town Council.
Cllr Barton expressed his thanks to all the members of the Youth Forum for their contributions and reported the credit to themselves, their parents and the schools that their commitment, abilities and maturity have shown.
Youth Forum members and families leave the meeting.

Local Government Reorganisation
Trevor Leggo, Chief Executive Officer, East Sussex Association of Local Councils
Mr Leggo reported that the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority and the merging Districts and Boroughs with County Councils to create unitary authorities will be completed over the next three years and is considered evolution.
He described the history of establishment of County and Borough Councils and the later Urban and Rural District Councils. The powers and responsibilities for Town and Parish Councils were improved under the Local Government Act of 1972.
Mr Leggo highlighted that the detail remains unknown at this time, but that Town and Parish Councils are encouraged to consider what assets could be devolved from the District Council to benefit its community.

Andrew Vallance, Deputy Chief Executive. Rother District Council
Mr Vallance confirmed that there are two separate processes proposed: the election of a Mayor for Sussex; and the merging of District/Borough and County Councils.
He reported that proposals for the merging of East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove are to be submitted to Government in September 2025 and a decision will be announced in January 2026.
It is anticipated that election of a Mayor for the Strategic Authority responsible for housing, economic environment, transport and regeneration, and will speak directly to Government, will take place in May 2026, with a Shadow Unitary Authority in place for 2027 to take full responsibility in 2028.
Mr Vallance reported that some non-statutory services may go and selected non-income generation assets are likely to be offered to Town and Parish Councils.

Kathryn Field, County Councillor
Cllr Field advised that she has been a County Councillor for 33 years and, whilst there are concerns at the level of representation, the exciting change will help reduce duplication of services and, after some time, should see cost savings.

3 members of the public left the meeting.

It was highlighted that the changes are Government Policy led and it is accepted that generally people are concerned at change, particularly when not all facts are currently known.

Cllr Barton thanked the Panel for their informative presentations.

Simon Yates, Chief Inspector Sussex Police
CI Yates reported that Policing budgets should remain similar, although there may be a boundary change. He confirmed the Government plan to increase Neighbourhood Policing. CI Yates advised that Battle/Bexhill/Rye share two Police Officers with eight Police Community Support Officers. Community engagement is improved with three monthly meetings and he welcomed discussion with the Battle Youth Forum. He highlighted the priorities have seen positive results, and accepted that there is an increase in the reporting of shoplifting which requires some joint efforts. CI Yates acknowledged that access times to Battle Police Station are not ideal.
Mr Leggo highlighted that times of responses to calls on 101 have reduced from six minutes to two minutes.

TL, SY, AV left the meeting.

County Council Report

Cllr Field reported that a 4.99% increase in Council Tax included 2% for adult social care, and still required £12m allocated from General Reserves and the loss of some discretionary services. She confirmed that the Highways contract remains of concern and there had been some frustration at the newly resurfaced North Trade Road and High Street being dug up within such a short space of time.

Cllr Field reported that Netherfield Road continues to suffer from water ingress damage, with neither Southern Water or South East Water claiming responsibility.

She confirmed that, due to the almost unanimous agreement to Local Government Reorganisation there would be no election saving approximately £1.5m.

District Council Report

Cllr Burton highlighted that a report had been published in the Town Council's Annual Report recently circulated to all households in the Civil Parish of Battle and provided updates: the proposals to build a new leisure centre in Bexhill was no longer viable although £2m will be spent on a refurbishment of the Ravenside leisure centre; £4.2m Levelling UP funding has been redirected to the development of Blackfriars to reduce borrow; and that food waste caddies will be distributed in March 2026. She also reminded those present that a total of £420k had been granted to the Pavilion rebuild project.

Town Council Report

Cllr Barton reported that following several years' work by Council and several Task & Finish Groups, the rebuild of the Pavilion will finally start in mid-May. He thanked all those that had been involved and highlighted that the positive support for an application for a Public Works Loan Board loan had not been required due to the news that a successful application to the Community Ownership Fund had provided the final £200,000. He highlighted that, due to Rother District Council's decision not to continue to support CCTV in the High Street area, the Town Council has taken on this responsibility. Cllr Barton advised that discussions on the devolvement of play areas at Coronation Gardens and Netherfield are ongoing and that, following the closure of the public toilets in Mount Street, Council agreed to offer the ambulant toilet in the Almonry courtyard during hours of occupation, and is currently arranging for a Community Toilet Scheme in appropriate premises in the High Street – updates will be provided on the Council's website and social media. Finally, he confirmed that: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds of £15,000 have contributed to a replacement Battle Area Community Transport bus; the replacement of old sodium lights with LED lanterns continues; unfortunately, the Memorial Hall could not take advantage of CIL funds allocated due to the roof being assessed as unsuitable for solar panels; CIL has been put aside to provide match funding for a section of footway on Marley Lane between Harrier Lane and footpath 67.

Open Forum:

The Clerk read out the questions received in advance of the meeting and responses were provided as follows:

- Cllr Field confirmed that the landing for the **pedestrian crossing in the petrol station forecourt on Battle Hill** is still with the lawyers; Tesco, Esso & County Council
- Cllr Barton hoped that the **Local Government Reorganisation** has been covered by the presentations earlier in the meeting.
- Cllrs Cook and Field sympathised with residents affected by the **Blackfriars development** and highlighted that: building on this scale is always disruptive but in the long run it is temporary; footpath and field closure is temporary to facilitate the work and public safety. They will be accessible when the work is finished; trees are assessed by experts before they are removed; excessive noise, dirt etc should be reported to the site manager, Breheny who have been building the road are due to leave soon and the house builders will be on site with a different management structure. Information boards will remain and will have contact details on them and Environmental Health will monitor noise

to establish if it breaches regulations; the spine road was designed with a kink to avoid it becoming a rat run; the house builders are working to an end date but unforeseen circumstances can arise; parking spaces are part of the planning consent; infrastructure has to follow the building permissions; because of the way school place allocation works, the new building will only generate a requirement for 6 places; it is important to remember that the site is being developed by the housing company, not the Council. It was emphasised that there will be an opportunity for residents to have a guided tour of the site and ask questions directly to the operators.

- Cllr Burton expressed great pleasure to confirm the work conducted by the Council to **mitigate climate change and enhance biodiversity**: for the last two years completed the Local Government Association's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Accounting tool, which has given a clearer idea of the electricity and the fuels that it uses. It also included other items such as paper consumption and staff travel. Results have been analysed and conscious steps to reduce emissions are considered in all actions; installation of solar panels at the museum and the Almonry were researched, but pre-planning advice has informed us that this is not permissible due to being Grade 2 Listed Building in a conservation area; adapted or introduced policies which support the reduction of use of fossil fuels, for example the Investment Policy; a successful grant application provided funds to remove trees offering very few benefits to nature and replace with new native hedging which will be allowed to grow to a variety of heights offering greater biodiversity; existing hedging on the Council's estate was measured at 4 miles and this total will be added to in 2025; Slow Mow Summer routine will be adopted this year, which will leave strips of land at a significant longer length and mowing other grass areas to different heights. This all benefits wildlife.

  These endeavours and what residents can do in their own homes to reduce their carbon footprint have been regularly communicated via posters, newsletters and social media. This includes information on dark skies and nature friendly garden care. Information on public transport is also prioritised. The Town Council, like many organisations, has its challenges including sometimes resistant to making changes. It is often difficult to find the most sustainable source of a particular item from suppliers that the Council needs.
- Cllr Field reported that pavement margins and joints between paving slabs along Upper Lake has been resolved.

Open Forum

- In response to a question, Cllr Barton reported that there would be no additional vehicle parking created at the Recreation Ground as there is no space and walking is encouraged.
- A bi-monthly meeting of Rother Forum was highlighted for attendance by all.

2 members of the public left the meeting

- Concerns at traffic, particularly HGVs through the High Street and the increase in Marley Lane which has a 7.5 tonne max load. Cllr Barton confirmed that the Council has an Action Plan item to seek change upon the completion of the Queensway link road.

6 members of the public left the meeting

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Town Clerk and Clerk for all their work in preparing for this Assembly.

Cllr Barton thanked residents for attending and reminded everyone that monthly Council meetings are open to all to attend.

There being no further matters, the meeting closed at 20.58.