Battle Parish Assembly 2026

The following notes summarise the proceedings at the Assembly held on 30 April 2026 at Battle Memorial Hall, High Street, Battle at 7pm.

Approximately 90 attendees plus K Mullan MP, County, District and Town Councillors and presenters. Chairman of Battle Town Council, Cllr A Barton, Chairman of the meeting, Town Clerk C Harris took the notes.

Cllr Sue Burton, Vice-Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked Saxonwood WI for providing the refreshments and pointed out the emergency exits and toilet facilities. She reported that the meeting will be recorded to aid the production of the notes of the meeting.

Battle Community Award
Cllr Barton highlighted the extensive number of community groups that this year's winner has been involved in and the number of nominations received. Gary Dunk was welcomed to receive the Battle Community Award for 2026. Mr Dunk humbly accepted the award and praised the many other people that worked as teams to ensure that the groups and activities were successful.

Natural Flood Management in Battle - Dean Morrison, High Weald National Landscape
Mr Morrison highlighted there is a 20year strategy for the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald's natural beauty. This includes measure to reduce the effects of the inceasing problem of flooding. Natural Flood Managements schemes, mimicing natural processes and using natural materials found in the area are being undertaken with the assistance of The Conservation Volunteers and members of the community throughout the region. Improvements to the water course at Mansers Shaw has recently been completed with the assistance of a great group of volunteers. Further information on activities in the area may be found at https://www.tcv.org.uk/southeast/sussex/

The New Battle Pantry - Affordable Food Support for Our Community - Michelle Pannell
Ms Pannell reported on the new Battle Pantry for those who need a helping hand. This is available on Wednesdays between 12pm and 1pm at the St Mary's Church Hall. This service provides a choice of shopping products at a quarter of the usual cost, with all items fresh and in date. Ms Pannell reported that this provides more dignity and less stigma to those in need. It was highlighted that the Battle Foodbank is still available for those in crisis, with a referral voucher, Wednesdays between 1.30 and 2pm. In response to questions, Ms Pannell confirmed that donations are welcome at Jempsons and the Co-op, or at St Mary's Church Hall on Tuesdays between 10am and 12pm. She was pleased to report that they currently have sufficient volunteers.

European Year of the Normans - Marie-Louise Neill
Ms Neill presented a comprehensive report on the background to this commemoration of the influence of Norman culture throughout Europe. She highlighted that many Cities and organisations are taking part with various events to appeal to communities with the first event for Battle on 15 May 2026 - the arrival of the trial Trophee Vhelio. Ms Neill reported that further events include: La Mora exhibit in the Museum; William 1000 Battle Tree Warden Challenge; School Ceramic Legacy; La Mora Tapestry Project; Initinere Collectif – a live history event; St Mary's – a living Norman legacy; Battle Twinning Event; Battle & District Historical Society – 5 lectures by distinguished academics on Normans; English Heritage events; Norman food and drink market. A search on the VisitBattle.com site was encouraged and all volunteers are welcome.

The Chairman of Battle Town Council, Cllr Dr Andrew Barton welcomed everybody to the formal meeting and introduced all Councillors present.

The notes from the meeting held on 23 April 2025 were accepted as a true record.

Presentation from Battle Youth Forum

Lewis Paton, Sam Gjergji, Elliot Smith, Lilly Hopton and Oliver Cacciatore spoke in turn to report that: last year they visited Parliament and were able to speak with Kieren Mullen MP about what goes on and this year a return visit will include a visit to the Education Centre to learn more about the political system in the UK; accepted a Greymore site visit at the Tapestry development and took a special interest in the nature trail around the site. A further visit is planned; another ongoing environmental project is the Tree Warden William 1000 Tree Challenge, including planting 250 trees at Claverham Community College; assisted with La Mora Tapestry which tells the story of the boat that Matilda gave to William to conquer England; welcomed some French exchange students from St. Valery sur Somme on a visit around the Museum, Almonry and Battle Abbey and plans to have a return visit are progressing; joined the Community Litter Pick trying to help Battle to be a cleaner place to live; very proud to witness the triumphant demolishment of the old pavilion and the rebuilding and opening of the new Pavilion, which looks spectacular.

Devolution of assets from Rother District Council

Cllr David Russell reported that the Town Council had submitted Business Plans to Rother District Council for the play areas and open spaces at Coronation Gardens and Netherfield, which have been accepted and will be taken forward, hopefully, within this current financial year. He emphasised that there is a full legal process to be followed by RDC for all their proposed asset transfers which will take some time and we are working with them to complete the transfer as quickly as possible.

Council has requested insurance reports and tree condition surveys for both play areas, although RDC are now suggesting that these will not be available until the 'transfer' phase.

The Council has put aside £40,000, which includes £15,000 towards replacement of play equipment. Nearer the time, residents' ideas and contributions will be welcomed.

Report from Kieran Mullan, Member of Parliament

Dr Mullan, MP, reported on his work with the Town Council and Chamber of Commerce over the year which included the concern over SGN road works during the summer last year; instigating a cash point petition for Battle High Street, which has identified that Battle is entitled to one; working with Martins Oak Doctors Surgery for new premises; helping to renew links with the Football Foundation for funds towards the new Pavilion; assisting with transportation to Parliament of the La Mora Tapestry; and several community events including the litter picks. Dr Mullan expressed his gratitude to the many volunteers in the Town and highlighted the work that Helen and her team are undertaking with the Memorial Hall. He expressed frustration that there was no dispensation for Rother's housing target despite much of the area being within the High Weald National Landscape and that the issue with potholes remains unresolved.

Report from County Councillor Kathryn Field

Council Tax will rise by 4.99% plus an extra 2% which is the Adult Social Care precept. The County Council finances were examined by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) and were found to be well managed. Nevertheless, the budget was £55m in deficit with no resources available to fill the hole without a rise in Council Tax of 19%. The Administration has been successful in getting Extra

Financial Support from the government, £70m. This is a loan granted on a draw down basis with an annual repayment cost of £6.6m if the whole amount is used. It is not clear what are the plans for the extra £15m nor is it clear how it is planned to repay and service the loan. It is assumed that this will inevitably lead to more borrowing.
Adult Social Care has had a full inspection from CQC this year and was found to be good. I think that this is a testament to the staff and what they are able to achieve with ever diminishing funding from government. Adult Social Care and Health is pared to the bone and only delivering statutory services

Ofsted undertook a Focused Visit in July which looked at services for children in need of or subject to a protection plan. It was found that these children have access to services which make a positive difference in their lives. It was also found that the continuing investment and relentless focus on supporting social workers and staff was making a real difference.
The Children in Care Council won first place for their My Things Matter project in the campaign award category at the National Voice Awards 2025
As part of the Family First programme a Family First Consultation Advice Line was launched to help professionals provide early support to families.
6 of our residential homes for children were rated good by Ofsted and one is outstanding. One of our homes is a national resource.
Children's Services is largely demand led which leads to budgetary issues
Trading Standards made 130 interventions in the first 9 months of 2025/26 to protect vulnerable people who had been the target of rogue trading or financial abuse. Interventions included installing call blockers and CCTV.
The County Council has received £4.41m from the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund to support the rollout of on street electric vehicle charging points. A preferred supplier has been selected and the contract will be awarded soon.
Thirteen energy efficiency projects were completed on council buildings during the first 9 months of the year including insulation and solar energy schemes. Carbon emissions for quarters 1 & 2 of 2025/26 saw a 23% reduction with the same period in 2024/25 and a 52% reduction compared with the same period in the baseline year of 2019/20
I have left potholes until last because we all see the situation daily. There is undoubtedly a lot of money spent on their repair, but we all see that the quality is often poor and does not last. Highways maintenance work is done by the council's contractor Balfour Beatty. The work it does and how it does it is specified in the contract which is due for renewal in 2030.

Report from District Councillor Vikki Cook

Council Tax: In February Rother Council unanimously agreed the budget for 2026/27. The proposal was for a 2.99% increase making the baseline charge on a Band D property £216.95 before the Parish, Police, Fire and Rescue and East Sussex County Council add their elements making a total of for Band D £2,737.33. Our Parish Precept is £377.64.

	2026/27 £	Increase %
Rother District Council	216.95	2.99%
East Sussex County Council	1,960.29	4.99%
East Sussex Fire & Rescue	117.49	4.44%
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner	281.91	5.62%
Sub total	2,576.64	4.87%
Parish & Town average across Rother	124.31	19.32%
Total	**2,700.95**	**5.45%**

Unlike recent years, the budget does not include drawing down reserves to bridge any shortfall. This has been the result of identifying saving over the year with officers and members closely involved in the

process. The reserves which ideally should be £5 million are at £2.5 million, but it is expected the savings should deliver £443,000 into the reserves at the end of the financial year.

Local Government Reorganisation: This is the biggest change to local government for over 50 years with the disappearance of all districts and boroughs across East Sussex. Sussex councils have been told that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has not made a decision on their proposals for local government reorganisation but wants to make its own modifications to them, causing most to protest vehemently. A technical consultation looms. The ministry's news was communicated when Parliament was about to go into recess and local councils into pre-election purdah.

Six months after councils submitted their proposals for new unitary authorities, the Secretary of State, Steve Reed has told them that: he has "significant concerns about keeping Brighton and Hove on its current footprint". This was the proposal of East Sussex County Council, Hastings, Eastbourne, Lewes and Rother.

On Brighton & Hove City Council's proposal for five unitaries across Sussex, Reed wrote in an update on 25 March that he was concerned about the cost it would involve and the "disaggregation risks" it would entail – though he offered no explanation of what these might be.

Instead he offered his own suggestions including expansion of the Brighton & Hove unitary to include parts of Lewes – East Saltdean & Telscombe Cliffs, Peavehaven West, East and North and Falmer Parish – on which he plans to hold a six-week technical consultation with policy officials and other experts after the local elections in May. In two public consultations residents of these

A map accompanying his letter was reissued on 27 March. Sussex would have four unitary authorities, under this proposal as follows:

Unitary A: Eastbourne, Hastings, Rother, Wealden and remaining parts of Lewes (population around 537,000)

Unitary B: Arun, Adur, Worthing (around 349,000)

Unitary C: Brighton, East Saltdean & Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven West, East and North, Falmer Parish (around 308,000)

Unitary D: Crawley, Chichester, Horsham, Mid Sussex (around 566,000).

Despite the delay, the ministry was still committed to holding elections to the new unitaries in May 2027 and implementing the reorganisation in April 2028.

Transfer of assets: Meanwhile, work is ongoing with Rother preparing to transfer 71 of their 171 assets to parish or town councils. The principle is that assets such as toilets and recreation spaces would be protected under the local parish and town councils once the new Unitary Authority is in place.

The Government have instructed Councils about to be abolished they are not to transfer fund raising assets, such as car parks.

Relationship between the new Unitary Authority and Parish and Town Councils: One of the known factors is that with Districts and Boroughs disappearing there will be a loss of local knowledge and potential for communication failure with such an enormous single authority. In fact this was the main concern when the proposals were out for consultation.

Rother Association of Local Councils under their new Chair and Vice Chair have taken on this challenge and have set up a working party to gather information from existing unitaries and to agree a proposal which, acting as a template across the new authority will then be passed on for them to implement if agreed. Our CE, Lorna Ford already chairs the Leaders Group of the existing councils, so is in a good position to support the implementation of this work.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Consultation on the revised NPPF recently closed on 23 February and the Government intend to bring in the new measures on 1 May. There are some changes which are improvements to make the planning process less unwieldy. However, the main thrust of the changes is to centralise the power within the system, to tip the balance in favour of major developers and landowners and to reduce local democratic influence.

The over-riding principal is that all planning should be decided by officers with only exceptional developments to be decided by committee. An example of such changes is that members will no longer be able to call in an application for consideration by the planning committee. Members of the public and the local town and parish councils would no longer be allowed to speak at planning meetings. We were

proud to introduce this change. Other measures are that officers will be required to decide on all household developments, minor commercial development and minor residential development. The definition of minor is 9 homes. Clearly this wouldn't be considered minor in a small hamlet or village. Any development having a decision in principle in a pre-application, would be dealt with by officers.

The Government have not understood that it is not the planning process which holds up development, but the build out of land with permission and that is outside the control of local authorities. Only half the homes with planning permission since 2012/13 have been built. 1.4 million have planning consent!

Rother's Draft Local Plan

The latest list of potential housing development sites in the draft Local Plan have been a cause fo concern for many residents in Battle.

However, the proposals need to be set in the context of first the Government's requirements for the Rother Local Plan and second the reasons why Rother finds it difficult to meet any nationally imposed targets.

First is the failure in the recent past of Rother's meeting Government targets for house building. The Government has set housebuilding targets for many years now, and Rother has never achieved them. In 2014, Rother had a target of 335 homes a year to be built in Rother. On average, since that time, 215 homes have been built. The Government's latest target for Rother is 912 homes per year to be built. Achieving that target is clearly impossible based on past performance.

Second, the major reason why Rother has not been able to meet the target set by the Government is simply because Rother is a district blessed by having in Sussex at least, the greatest proportion of protected landscape, nearly 90%, by virtue of the High Weald National Landscape, several Special Areas of Conservation and a Ramsar site. That has the obvious effect of reducing the area on which most development can take place. That is also why the majority of new housing proposed in the new draft Local Plan is in Bexhill.

Planning Enforcement: This area of Rother's work has always attracted criticism as it is a cumbersome process and takes far too long. Our new Head of Planning Mike Hughes has managed to get agreed funding and to recruit another enforcement officer. When he took over, the backlog of cases was at 140. It is now down to 95 and the aim is to reduce this to 50 withing a month.

Relying on residents to report breaches, I was pleased with the immediate action taken on the sites on Beech House Lane which has a long history of requiring enforcement.

Waste management and street cleansing: Rother, Hastings and Wealden Councils have a joint waste contract with Biffa who continue to provide a very good service with few complaints. This service represents significant budget pressure for the Council. Contract costs amounted to c.£5.9m in 2024/25, rising to c. £6.5m in 2025/26 and forecast to reach £7.58m in 2026/27. Additionally, the introduction of the new food waste service in Rother has increased costs by c.£1m for 2026/27.

All councils have been required to offer weekly food collections and around 25% of councils haven't managed to do this by April. Food waste makes up an average 0f 30% of household bin and can easily be recycled.

Temporary accommodation: The council has a duty to provide emergency/temporary accommodation (TA) for homeless households whilst assessing their case and/or ahead of securing more permanent accommodation. This pressure has been increasing over recent years across the country but particularly in the south east where increasing demand is putting significant pressure on budgets. Whilst some of the costs of this accommodation are covered by housing benefit there remains a significant cost borne by the Council directly. We have reduced the costs considerably by providing our own accommodation. At present we have 54 properties

In January this year, we have 249 people in temporary accommodation. 159 of those are with children. We have 1,450 on our housing register.

Community Grants: Rother have transferred the administration of their community grant scheme to Sussex Community Foundation. Nearly £100,000 of funding has been given to 15 grass roots projects across Rother. Community Groups, town and parish councils are eligible to apply. Eligible groups can apply for up to £10,000 for general projects and £20,000 for buildings.

The scheme is funded in part by Rother Community Lottery which has contributed nearly £50,000 between 2021 and 2025.

Climate Emergency: Last year Rother was listed as the most improved district council for its efforts to tackle climate change. Climate Emergency UK assesses all councils on the actions they have taken. We were rated ninth out of 51 district councils. Rother councillors agreed an ambitious target to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 – 20 years ahead of the national target. Officers and members have worked across the council to introduce measures which have contributed to supporting our ambitious target, such as ring fencing some grants and a proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy for projects that address climate change or environmental issues. Every committee decision considers carbon emissions and environmental impacts. There is a Green Team of officers in all Departments to take forward initiatives.

Report from Town Councillor Sue Burton

As always BTC has had a busy year with its full calendar of meetings of Full council, standing committees and various sub-committees. There is a full complement of 13 councillors and attendance is very good at all meetings. Amy Onyett, assistance to the clerk, has been welcomed to the team.

Estates Committee have continued to manage all their green spaces within Battle, Netherfield and Telham. The amenity field and Telham Recreation ground are our wild-life meadows. The pavilion is now open and being used by Battle Town Football club and other groups. Slow mow summer is being expanded this year and the council hopes that residents are encouraged to mow their lawn less. There has been substantial amount of tree work completed on the edges of some of the allotment sites by both the grounds maintenance staff and external tree surgeons. We are disappointed that the café has taken longer than we expected to get up and running but it will be open very soon.

Town Development and External Relations Committee has been working with other agencies on a Marketing Strategy. The committee have organised or supported a number of events including the Remembrance event on the Abbey Steps, VJ day, the opening event of the pavilion, and tonight's Parish assembly. There were 2 litter picks across the town with lots of residents joining and but there's always room for more. The Santas tours were popular with residents again this year.

The Finance and General Purposes has managed the council's finances well and now the general reserves stand at the recommended level for local authorities. The Almony Physic garden has been restored after being closed during the building works on the Almonry. It is now looking fantastic, and I would recommend you visit it if you haven't been already.

For this work in the garden and so many of the council activities including attending sub committees and Task and finish groups we say to our volunteers thank you so much for your time and contribution.

Questions received prior to the meeting

Cllr Burton highlighted that questions received in advance will now be presented by the Clerk and responded by the appropriate representatives. There would be no supplementary questions at this time, although, time permitting, additional questions would be invited after this section.

Firstly given the Blackfriars development which has had a huge impact on the local residents and caused huge environmental damage in the area, could we please be assured that there will be litter bins placed at the top of Starrs Mead and along Harrier lane. Especially with Battle Great Woods now charging for parking as this is likely to mean that more people will park in Harrier Lane and drop litter and there is enough litter and dog poop around the area at the moment as it is, due to irresponsible

dog owners. I am not a dog hater in fact the opposite as I have a dog and carry poop bags, however there is a distinct lack of dog waste bins.

District Cllr Cook responded:
Thank you for your question Linnie which I will endeavour to respond to.
Firstly, with regard to Litter Bins. I have written to both ESCC and RDC to ask if they would consider dual purpose litter bins in the areas you suggested. I am afraid a holding answer of " When the development is finished ….." was received and also a comment about have we approached our parish council?
I think the Forestry Commission is in charge of the Great wood and so it may be that they could also be asked to provide one.

Perhaps the clerk could indicate if we could place litter bins on our estates agenda for Harrier Lane as a starting point.

Battle Town Clerk responded that the Town Council provides litter bins on its land only. Rother District Council are responsible for litter matters.

I would also like to know why the Blackfriars housing development is leaving lights on all night when there are no residents living there at the moment, this is not beneficial to the environment and even when residents do move in they wouldn't be on all night, I have tried to speak to the site about this but the workers have no idea themselves as to why the lights are being left on.
Another question I would like answered is when will all the street lights be changed to the LED brighter lights, these are better I am told for the environment and also cheaper to run, I was told by the chap changing one such street lamp that Battle only changes two per year, surely this is incorrect. Given the amount of new residents that will be on the Blackfriars site surely Harrier Lane should be lit up with these bulbs?

District Cllr Cook responded:
I contacted the Project Manager at Blackfriars Tapestry site who responded that The lights at the Blackfriars Housing Development are on because residents have now moved in to the development.

I tried to get a response from ESCC about their programme for replacing lights with LEDs but their website is not very helpful and was not forthcoming with either a name or email address only a telephone number FOR EMERGENCIES ONLY!!
It is not ESCC / government / NPPF policy for developments to be fitted with street lights to protect Dark Skies.

Town Cllr Silk reported:
The Council has a rolling maintenance programme of repairs and LED replacements to lights, *for which we are responsible (those painted green)*. The programme has been a long-term project, with 21 replacements agreed for this financial year.

Extrapolating data from a couple of years ago indicates that about 190 of our 259 lights, will already have been changed.

I also note that when the community clean up is undertaken it isn't down the Marley Lane end of Battle and there is certainly litter laying around, especially down the alley leading to the train station.
Town Cllr Barton responded:
Thank you for this question. The Marley Lane area was not forgotten with the litter picking day indeed a group of volunteers (Battle for Change) collected some 10 bags of litter during our spring clean in March).

On the trapped litter issue at both the railway and in Ivan Fosters yard, this is unpleasant, and Vikki Cook takes an interest in the area and has written to Network rail to ask about the area beside the twitten and has spoken with Mr Foster, with a positive result.

When the railway line is closed at weekends, the amazing Jay Rowse also walks along and clears the litter by the track.

Rother District Councillors are aware of the destroyed litter bin and taking steps to get it replaced.

Battle Town Council will be taking forward your comments on pot holes in Harrier Lane to the agenda to the next meeting between Battle Town Council, East Sussex County Council and Rother District Council.

A response form SECRP has also confirmed that they are progressing a de-littering of the railway trackside and Network rail have been advised of the excess trapped litter between Marley Lane and Marley rise.

In addition, RDC will be replacing the damaged bin at Marley Rise.

What is happening with replacing the condemned power infrastructure for the Christmas lights on the high street? Last year BTC stated you were obtaining quotes to replace the infrastructure. Has a contractor now been commissioned and will this work be completed before this this Christmas season?

Town Cllr Neill responded:
Battle Town Council has approached several electrical companies to request a quote for this substantial work. So far, two quotes have been received, which are vastly different in value. Further quotes are awaited. As a result, the work will shortly be advertised on the Government's Contract Finder website. This may feel like a lengthy process, but the Council must ensure it gets good value for money for residents, as it is they who will be footing the bill.

The owners of the buildings affected by this work will also need to be consulted prior to confirmation of work. In short, this may require considerable consultation and planning.

The Council will also need to consider the priority of this work, following the wonderful display provided by local people and retailers last year. The Chamber of Commerce will be consulted, so that the result works for everyone.

What infrastructure will be put in place to support-

- Transport & road networks?
- Services?
- Utilities?

- Have the effects on the local environment been considered, given the volume of houses proposed?

- Have the effects on people's quality of life long-term, and the disruption to the building of the developments in the medium term been considered?

- How will the developments effect tourism, our heritage, existing amenities and the character of the town?

- What is the "payback" to the community - what is the expected returns from the developers and the anticipated improvements or extra provisions there will be to support the local community?

- Who, and to what benefit are these developments for?

A further question on the same matter:
Battle has 171 listed buildings and is arguably one of most important towns in England. We have a great deal of history and heritage but it is being decimated through proposed planning sites, most notably that adjacent to Mansers Shaw/bottom of Asten Fields. The traffic is destroying our historic buildings and more houses will decimate Battle. What are Battle Town Council doing to push back?

District Cllr Cook responded:

1.Rother District Council, like all Local Planning Authorities, is required by Government to prepare a Local Plan for its area and to keep this up to date.

2. The purpose of a Local Plan is to guide the future development of an area, including determining where new homes, businesses and infrastructure should be built and which areas should be protected.

3. Without a Local Plan, development will still happen. However, it is more likely to be "speculative", i.e. directed by developers. It is much more difficult to plan for the infrastructure (including community facilities) required to support speculative development and the Council would have significantly less control where development goes (with an accompanying inability to reflect community aspirations and priorities).

4. RDC's current ("adopted") Local Plan is the Core Strategy (2014) and the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (DaSA) (2019). These, together with the Battle Neighbourhood Plan (2021) make up the "development plan" for Battle, against which planning applications are determined. All of these documents plan for the period to 2028. Given the age of these documents and the fast-approaching end of their plan period, it is now necessary for RDC to adopt a new Local Plan. This will plan for the period up to 2042. Battle Town Council may also wish to review its Neighbourhood Plan.

5. The Government has set new housing targets, requiring councils nationwide (and particularly in the South East of England) to plan for higher housing numbers than in previous years. Rother's government mandated housing target has increased significantly – and this means making some very difficult decisions about where new development will go.

6. The draft Rother Local Plan which was published for consultation during January to March 2026 included proposed site allocations totalling some 8,427 new homes to 2042, equating to 495 dwellings per year across Rother, together with sites for new employment floorspace. These numbers may change as RDC moves through the plan-making process and sites are finalised.

7. While 495 homes per year is significantly more than the number of houses currently being built across Rother District (on average 215 per year), it still falls significantly short of the number the Government wants us to plan for (912 dwellings per year). We consider this shortfall is justified due to Rother's significant environmental constraints, including its considerable National Landscape coverage (83% of the district, plus another 7% of the district made up of protected habitat sites). Without these environmental constraints Rother would have to plan for the full Government target (i.e. 912 dwellings per year). We acknowledge that the draft Local Plan proposes some larger scale development in Battle, within the High Weald National Landscape. We have to balance this with the significant need for housing, particularly affordable housing, and the relative sustainability of Battle compared to many other settlements in Rother in terms of the existing level of services and public transport connections. We recognise however that infrastructure will need to improve in order to serve new development and we are undertaking further work on this before finalising the Local Plan.

9. We would stress that the Local Plan is not yet in its final form. The next steps for Rother are to consider all representations received to the recent consultation and to finalise the evidence base. We will also need to liaise with stakeholders as required. This will all inform which sites will go forward as proposed allocations in the "submission" version of the Local Plan, scheduled to be published for public comment in early Autumn 2026. The submission version of the Local Plan will include both site allocations and policies. A "consultation statement" will also be published at this time which will summarise the comments received to the Jan- March 2026 consultation, and RDC's responses to them.

10. Following this, in December 2026, the Local Plan will be submitted to Government. An "examination in public" by an independent Planning Inspector will then take place, likely in 2027. Only when it passes this process may RDC adopt the new Local Plan.
11. An adopted Local Plan brings clarity and plays a key role in responding to the Climate Emergency, delivering the District's housing, economic, community and infrastructure needs; and protecting the special landscapes, habitats and heritage of the district. It is important that the Local Plan strikes the right balance in the best interests of the district's residents and businesses as well as the environment.

As I referred to in an earlier question about the Local Plan. As yet no planning applications have been put forward for any of the sites in the proposed local plans.

If and when any firm applications should come forward all these comments would be naturally taken into consideration and residents as well as councillors will have the opportunity to share their views.

With regard you question about infrastructure this is a matter for multiple consultees regarding Roads Services and Utilities including the Electricity and Gas companies the water and sewage companies the environmental agencies as well as highways

One of the pillars of the RDC local plan is Green to the Core and RDC will consult with the environment agency, climate and ecological groups will also be consulted to consider the effects on biodiversity, pollution and wellbeing.

Conditions on any future developments will be considered to reduce disruption and although I know residents at the Spinney and Harrier lane will disagree these conditions are usually adhered to and any contractors who don't are reported and reminded. With regard to people's health what could be better than to move to this wonderful part of our county.

There is concern I know about the effect on our heritage buildings and English Heritage will also have the opportunity to comment on this. Battle is a small town with a big story and tourism is a factor that benefits our community. ESCC have ways of calculating the effect of increasing numbers on Schools and Medical services and they will be the best people to comment on
Existing amenities schools etc.
Community Infrastructure levy is paid to the District and Town Council and these monies ca be used to benefit our town. The Recreation Ground in Battle has benefitted hugely form CIL monies and RDC recently set aside a sum to support accessibility at Battle railway station.

Town Cllr Wheeler added:
At Battle Town Council we responded to the draft local plan consultation and our comments are on our website with the Planning & Transport Committee minutes for the meeting held on 14 April 2026. The Council will continue to be a statutory consultee on planning matters and will represent local views to the best of its authority.

What is the latest information on the proposed Local Government re-organisation?
District Cllr Cook responded:
Please see my District Councillors report above.

With ongoing and proposed developments in the area - particularly new housing and retail sites such as supermarkets etc - what consideration is being given to the provision of appropriate healthcare infrastructure, including GP premises? As demand on local services continues to grow, ensuring adequate primary care facilities is becoming increasingly important.
We would welcome any information on how this is being addressed within current and future planning.

Why can't the developers build a new surgery on one of the already proposed sites in Battle?

District Cllr Cook responded:
The NHS are involved in the Infrastructure discussions that take place when new developments are proposed.
- We have been working with them and a new medical centre at Barnhorn Green in Bexhill is progressing, it is at the design and planning stage.
- RDC and the NHS are working together in Robertsbridge. They have CIL funding for the construction of a new surgery.
Interestingly, there is a suggestion that there should be an 'infrastructure first' approach to development, requiring new housing to include GPs, schools and transport links upfront. This is probably possible in new town type developments, but I am not sure if this is possible in the developments that we see at the moment in Rother. However, it maybe something that a new strategic mayoral authority can consider.

Traffic is considered by most residents the single biggest blight on our small town, having a negative effect on the wellbeing of residents, visitors and local businesses alike. It puts pedestrians at risk, many of which are of school age or elderly, and causes high levels of air and noise pollution throughout the day and into the late evening. Although travel times to and from Bexhill, St Leonards and John's Cross are quicker along the sparsly populated A21 trunk road, a higher volume of traffic is still passing along the A2100 even after the completion of the Combe Valley Way Link. My question is, what is BTC doing to pressure Rother and ESCC into implementing traffic calming measures to mitigate or divert traffic away from Battle's narrow and highly congested streets?

Town Cllr Wheeler responded:
The Council has created a Traffic Calming Task & Finish Group to look at such problems, to investigate solutions and to recommend actions to the Planning & Transport Committee. From that point, the Council will use its established links with Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council to pursue appropriate changes.

Harrier Lane is also developing large potholes now due to the heavy vehicles entering and leaving the Blackfriers site and whilst understanding that this is not your remit perhaps you could speak to highways to get them to do something about this before it gets much worse.
This end of Battle appears to be the forgotten end but we all pay our council tax and deserve better.
County Cllr Field responded:
Please send the What3Words location of potholes to me and I will forward for repair, if they fit the criteria. The issues at Harrier Lane will be taken to the next SLR (Strengthening Local Relationships meeting with East Sussex Highways) because the building will be nearer to completion at that time, and it is unlikely that Highways will look at the road unless there are compliant potholes until the project is finished and the extent of the damaged can be assessed.

Given the increasing number of reports and complaints regarding the mass felling of trees in advance of planning applications at sites including, but not limited to, Caldbec Hill, the Beech Estate, and Park Lane, what specific actions does Battle Town Council intend to take to protect trees at risk, and to ensure that pre-emptive clearance does not undermine the integrity of the planning process or the preservation of our local environment?
Town Cllr Howell responded:
Battle Town Council shares the concerns raised at the loss of any trees, particularly within the Conservation Area and, when we are aware of any actions that do not have the relevant permissions, will immediately report to the Planning Authority for action. These matters are often reported to the Planning & Transport Committee. Unfortunately, the Town Council has no legal authority to interfere directly and nor can they get involved with what people do within their own gardens.

Is there a confirmed and approved plan for the proposed pedestrian crossing at Tesco on Battle Hill? Is there a confirmed start date for the works?

County Cllr Field responded:
There have been many delays due to legal and safety issues. However, £200k of Community Infrastructure Levy funds have been allocated towards this project and it is progressing. Esso have now agreed a route across its forecourt, and the County Council's safety team are waiting for the detailed design and audit. There is no start date yet but the budget is still there to complete this project.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires councils to give due regard to equality considerations when making decisions, which has not been met in the case of the closure of the Battle public toilets in November 2023.

Rother District Council failed to publish its Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) at the time of the decision. Access was only obtained through a Freedom of Information request, which raises concerns about transparency and accountability.

The EqIA itself is fundamentally flawed. It relies on outdated information, does not clearly cite its data sources, and uses vague, passive language like "MAY" have an impact, when there undoubtedly will be an impact. It asserts the closure would not disproportionately affect different demographic groups but does not provide robust evidence to support this claim.

There was also a clear failure to conduct meaningful consultation. The duty requires engagement with a broad range of potentially affected groups yet consultation appears to have been limited to a running/cycling group in Bexhill and bus driver representatives. This does not reflect the needs or perspectives of those most likely to be impacted, particularly disabled people, older residents, and others who rely on accessible public facilities.
Furthermore, no updated assessment or follow up consultation has been undertaken since the closures, despite ongoing concerns about social inclusion and accessibility.

For the past three years this issue has been consistently raised at our public assemblies, demonstrating sustained community concern. There is a clear preference for retaining these facilities under collective ownership. The proposal to close and sell them for commercial use is not aligned with community needs.

What steps will the council now take to rectify these procedural failures, ensure full compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, and meaningfully involve affected communities in any future decisions regarding public amenities, particularly given the anticipated increase in visitors this year?

District Cllr Cook responded:
Devolvement of services across the whole district has been widely consulted at RDC.
Quite simply the Council does not have sufficient monies to continue to offer non statutory services.
Vandalism, public behaviour and lack of respect for these facilities has left many in need of thousands of pounds worth of maintenance, and there is simply not the funding. Across the whole district toilets have been closed down and offered to councils to run or to private enterprise.
As a councillor I am disappointed that this whole process has been woefully slow and many proposals have failed at the first hurdle simply because of the time it has taken to dispose of public amenities.
As a councillor I will continue to ask for better maintenance of the facilities we do have and seek answers as to why this process is being delayed.

The alternative "community toilet scheme" is inadequate. It is poorly advertised, lacks visible signage and creates barriers for vulnerable groups, particularly those with disabilities who may not feel able or welcome to use private business facilities in the same way as public amenities.
Town Cllr Silk responded:

As you know, the Community Toilet Scheme was introduced to offer alternative facilities in the town centre after the closing of the Mount Street car park toilets by Rother District Council.

This scheme, although far from ideal, was felt to offer an immediate solution to the problem of loss of facilities, and it mirrors schemes run elsewhere in the country.

All businesses on the High Street were invited to apply to be part of the scheme and, based on the very limited applications received, three locations were chosen - subsequently increased to four - in addition to facilities at The Almonry, and Rother's remaining facilities at Market Square.

Mobility issues were integral in determining which locations were chosen for inclusion on the scheme.

The scheme is being monitored by the council, all Councillors have recently been asked for their comments, and submissions are currently being analysed.

My person opinion is that, yes, I think that advertising and signage is inadequate and my feedback to the Council included this. The Council is endeavouring to improve both signage and publicity of the scheme.
Participating businesses understood that ALL users were free to use the facilities without any obligation to make a purchase from the business.

Additional questions raised:

- Has there been a bus time table change from sixty to an eighty minute service? Cllr Field confirmed that timetables change periodically and, whilst she was not aware of the rationale, she will find out and report back to the questioner.
- Is the booking system for tip working, considering the perceived increase in fly-tipping? Cllr Field confirmed that RDC collect and ESCC dispose refuse. Personally, she feels that the booking system should be scrapped.
- Concerned that Swifts have not been seen. Cllr Barton reported that Swift boxes have been installed in new development and Swifts have been seen.
- Concern at the drastic hedge cutting undertaken close to Jempsons at an inappropriate time of the year. Cllr Cook will research this.

The Chairman thanked all Councillors, Officers and grounds staff for their support and work to make Battle a better place to live, work and visit.

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

On behalf of the Memorial Hall, Helen Baker thanked everyone for acknowledging the effort made by Gary Dunk.

There being no further matters, the meeting closed at 21.00.