

Farewell:

This year several long standing, knowledgeable and experienced councillors have stood down from the Council. James Kitchenham (Chair of the Highways Committee), Norman Wickenden and Graham Watson-Smith have contributed an amazing 30+ years of voluntary service to the community. We cannot emphasise how much we have valued their expertise and local knowledge, and thank them for their loyal and dedicated service. We are fortunate that new councillors have volunteered to take their place, and that we continue to have an efficient and fully-staffed Parish Council.

Water Outage:

Yet again this summer, Rotherfield was blighted by a failure of water supply in one of the very hot spells, leaving many of us without water and other connected facilities for a week. With RSM and other parish organisations, we did what we could to help mitigate the situation and put pressure on the water board, which brought some results. We held an open meeting with SE Water to express our concern and anger and were somewhat encouraged that they appear to have taken on board the very real problems for local farmers and vulnerable residents. They also set out long term plans to increase water supply for our area. We will keep monitoring their progress and pressuring them and will keep you informed.

REACT:

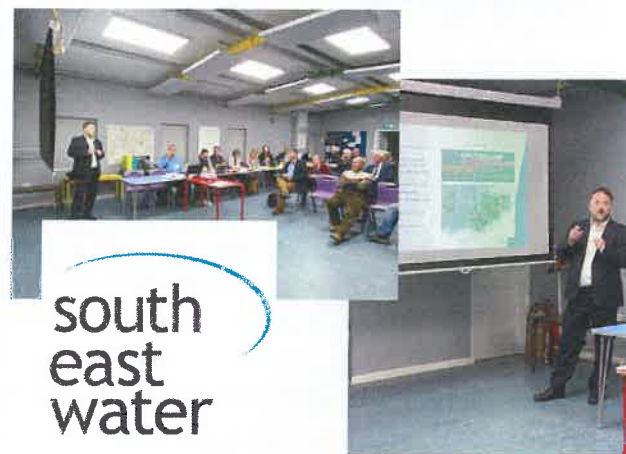
The parish has suffered a range of recent emergencies: heavy snow, freezing conditions, drought, health crises, transport issues, water shortages, and flooding. We are working as part of the REACT group to help develop a co-ordinated, planned and prepared programme to manage these crises, and are proud to report that significant interest in this innovative approach has been shown by other councils. RPC adopted the Rotherfield Parish Emergency Action Plan at its September meeting. We believe we are becoming better prepared for potential emergencies in the future.

Housing & Planning:

Housing issues and potential developments are also major concerns throughout the parish. RPC are a statutory consultee in the planning process, rather than decision makers, but our Planning Committee considers all applications carefully, taking account of the views of local residents. Full details of our decisions are recorded in the relevant minutes. We also facilitate public meetings to enable larger applications to be scrutinised. We are always informed and democratic in making these decisions and encourage members of the public to participate in the process.

Roads and Traffic:

Roads and traffic continue to be significant issues in Eridge, Mark Cross, Boarshead and Rotherfield. Once again, the Parish Council is not the responsible authority, but we work closely with East Sussex County Council to monitor our roads, pathways and street lighting. We are very concerned about potholes and drainage issues, about speeding, and parking problems in busy areas such as around schools. In Eridge Green, we are working with local residents to try to reduce traffic speeds and provide a safer environment for pedestrians and drivers on the A26; traffic engineering schemes take a long time to see to fruition, but we are determined to do what we can. Deer have become a significant local hazard locally, and we are putting up deer alert signs to warn drivers of the potential hazard. We have also erected signs on key riding routes to help protect horses and their riders.



REACT



Cost of Living:

The cost of living crisis continues to affect everyone. We are keenly aware of the pressures felt by residents as we set the Parish Council budget this month for the coming year. The costs of everything we do, from the price of the fuel used in grounds maintenance to staffing costs, have increased, but we try to keep costs as low as possible. Many councillors give up their own time to do some of the practical work which does not require a specialist work person. We continue to provide the essentials we are legally required to do, but additionally where possible to provide the extras which make village life in our beautiful corner of East Sussex special.

Civic Celebrations:

Celebrations and commemorations specified by the government seem to have become an annual event, the latest being the coronation of Charles III, which we marked with a community picnic and the lighting of the beacon, undertaken by the afore-mentioned Cllr. Wickenden, dressed in historic rural costume and for the occasion. Next June, we will be commemorating D-Day. However, long before this takes place, we have our own celebration for the lighting up of the parish for the Christmas season. This will take place on (Adam, please put in correct date as I am unsure without searching minutes and don't want to get it wrong). We hope to welcome you there.

Thank You & Best Wishes:

In October parishioners said their goodbyes to the Rector, Rev Canon Nigel Mason, after 22 years of dedicated service to the St Denys' and St Mark's churches, and RPC recognised his important contribution to village life by awarding him the newly-constituted honour of the Freedom of Rotherfield Parish. This award will be made in the future to others who have significantly contributed to the life of our parish. In the Interregnum between rectors, our Clerk, Adam Hardy, who is also the Associated Minister for Rotherfield and Mark Cross, has taken over many of Nigel's responsibilities. As always, RPC seems to be involved in everything!

Rotherfield Memorial Institute:

Finally, October marked the first anniversary of the Parish Council taking over the ownership of the Memorial Institute. The new Management Committee, with representatives from the Parish Council and the main user groups, has been running the Institute as a continuing home for RSM and as a community hub, with the new Parish Office open for residents to call in and talk about issues with the Clerk or with councillors at regular drop-in sessions. Significant progress has already been made to make the building safer and more comfortable for users, and we hope it will house an increasing number of groups and events as time goes on. We will be holding public consultations, together with the Management Committee, over possible future plans for the building, to ensure its relevance to the whole community, early in the New Year.

Merry Christmas:

We hope you will stay warm and comfortable throughout the coming winter - hopefully, it will be without major emergencies!

With every good wish for a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year from all of us at Rotherfield Parish Council.