

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

There were two main items debated at our June Council meeting. The first was the Council's response to the consultation launched by Chichester District Council into a Community Governance Review regarding a change in the parish boundary between Rogate and Harting parishes at Nyewood. Currently, the boundary runs along the old Midhurst to Petersfield railway line resulting in three properties that form part of Nyewood settlement being in Rogate Parish as opposed to being in Harting Parish along with the rest of Nyewood. The proposal is that the boundary is moved north to place the three properties in Harting Parish. After a wide-ranging debate that included the possibility of a new Nyewood Village Hall being located in the affected area, two issues emerged as paramount. One was that there was no demonstrable need for the change other than a sense of place for some of the affected residents. The second was that a change would incur administrative costs; not so much for the parish councils but for CDC and WSCC as well as mapping companies such as Ordnance Survey and other service companies. Consequently, the Council resolved that the boundary should remain unchanged.

Our second main item again involved a consultation response. This time it was WSCC Education services' School Effectiveness Strategy Consultation 2018-2022 which was a structured questionnaire available only on-line. We had the benefit of Neil Ryder' experience and views as a governor at Rogate and Stedham schools and a councillor for Trotton with Chithurst parish. The councillors felt that the questions in the consultation document were biased as the only way of making a comment was to 'disagree strongly' with the view expressed in the question. They also felt that any understanding of the complex issues was severely hampered by the lack of definitions or supporting data. We agreed that the Rogate and Rake schools were an essential element of our sustainable villages that must be retained beyond their supposed financial viability. Village schools are an integral part of the South Downs way of life. Closing the schools will further reduce our villages to empty shells. The Council would support initiatives to retain its schools including grouping them together and with others as appropriate. However, the Council would like a wider, more open and informed debate on the future of Village Schools.

Another consultation response was required in respect to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) that proposed to reduce the waiting restriction in Rogate village. The essence of the Shared Space Traffic Scheme in the village was the removal of white lines and traffic-related street clutter and the original scheme design excluded all waiting restrictions. At a late stage this was over-turned by WSCC Highways after a safety audit, resulting in the proposed TRO. The Council agreed to respond to WSCC stating that it wished to see the removal of all yellow lines from the village centre. To press the point further I attended, along with councillors Elizabeth Brown and Fiona Dix, the WSCC North Chichester County Local Committee held by the local county councillors with county officers in attendance. We objected to the retention of the waiting restrictions and the late decision without any consultation. We were informed that WSCC's independent safety auditor required the waiting restrictions regardless of the local circumstances and the overall objectives and ethos of the scheme. We pointed out that there were many locations in the UK where our proposals had been successfully implemented and therefore had passed safety audits.

We continue to be concerned about the significant impact of the road closures for the Velo South cycle race on 23 September. It has become clear that the event will go ahead regardless and may well be an annual event. The Council now wants to plan the measures we need to implement to minimise any disruption on the day (and possibly the day before and after). Residents' vehicles will need to be parked away from North Street and Habin Hill, livestock farmers may need access to fields, carers, doctors, and nurses may need to gain access, spectators and support vehicles will need to be parked etc. The Council will set up a working party and if you wish to join it or just offer advice, then please get in touch with me or the Clerk.

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