

Rogate Parish Council Chairman's letter

At the Annual Parish meeting on 18th April I gave the following as a summary of Parish Council activities over the past year.

My first comment was to make clear that we are not the police; we have no special powers or authority. Our powers are generally no wider than an individual person. We act as a link between local need and West Sussex County and Chichester District Councils, South Downs National Park and other authorities who have the power to make changes. We look for small changes that can make life in our Parish a little better.

One of our functions is to represent the Parish in commenting on planning applications. The law requires the Parish Council to be consulted on most planning applications made within the Parish boundary. We have no ability to adjudicate on decisions, only to make comment as representatives of the Parish. When we make a decision we refer to our neighbourhood plan and strive to be consistent. In 2023 we were consulted on the 46 Planning applications submitted within the Parish. We had no objections to all but 7 of these applications (though occasionally asked for specific conditions). About one application a week seems a lot for a small parish. Thanks to our planning committee for all their hard work over the year in giving due consideration to every one of these applications.

Whilst we do report planning transgressions, responsibility for enforcement is in the hands of SDNP who usually delegate this function to Chichester DC.

On more general matters, I highlight the following examples of Parish Council's activities over the past year:

1. Social Housing. We became aware of Hyde (the local social housing provider) selling houses in Parsonage Estate and local villages on the open market which effectively, reduces social housing availability in the Parish. Together with Trotton PC and help from Tim O'Kelly and others we successfully challenged Hyde. This resulted in a change to their policy of selling property when they felt the renovation work would be too costly.
2. Resilience. We worked with Rogate Village Hall in successfully applying for a SSE grant to purchase generator and associated infrastructure to provide a warm space facility in the event of prolonged power failure in the village.
3. Speed limits. Following on from the Rake community highways scheme (CHS) we have supported the progression of Rogate CHS for 20mph limits on roads within Rogate village centre and the reduction to 30mph limit on the Rogate Road in Hillbrow. Our application for a 20mph limit on Fynning lane was unsuccessful but we will try again for a 30mph when the other schemes have progressed.
4. Operation Watershed. We obtained funding and managed the £73k Landbuild contract for the installation of new drainage on North Street – many thanks for the input and support from the local residents.
5. Spring bulb planting. Following a successful CDC Coronation grant application we purchased and planted – with the help of volunteers - a huge quantity of bulbs throughout the parish. We have all enjoyed the results this spring and will do so in future years.

In addition to these highlighted activities other work continues in the background. This includes the maintenance of our four parish owned woodland/recreational areas (Fyning Recreation Ground, Terwick Woodland, Oliver's Piece and Rake Recreation Ground at Bull Hill), two children's playgrounds & equipment, outdoor gym, bus shelters, grit bins and Speed Indicator Devices. We made grants to Rogate and Terwick churchyards, Garbetts

wood steps repairs, Rake tennis court resurfacing, coronation events, wildflower planting at Rake; 4Sight and Petersfield Citizens Advice Bureau.

We welcomed two new Councillors in the year: Octavia Pollock and David Seddon (who sadly, had to resign later in the year because of ill health). We still have a vacancy if anybody is interested!

I conclude and finally a very big thank you to volunteers who help manage and tend to the various amenities in the village and to the councillors (including our district and county councillors) and clerk. We look forward to continuing to support the parish in 2024.

Max
Chairman, Rogate Parish Council