



Working for the Community in Rotherfield, Mark Cross, Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER 2025 IN ST DENYS' CHURCH, ROTHERFIELD, AT 7:30 PM

PRESENT

Cllr R Harris (Chair)
Cllr B Johnstone (Vice-Chair)
Cllr D Johnstone
Cllr J Richardson

Cllr P Beach
Cllr J Gosney
Cllr D Hiles
Cllr P Turner

Cllr E Holmes-Cutting
Cllr B Cheeseman
Cllr P Kember

COUNCILLORS ABSENT

Cllr Lucy Buck

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr Bob Standley (East Sussex County Council), Adam J Hardy (Parish Clerk & RFO),
Fiona Wilson (Council Administrator) and seven members of the public.

1. INTRODUCTION OF COUNCILLORS & OFFICERS

The Councillors and Officers introduced themselves to the members of the public.

2. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING: -

a) Public Forum:

None.

b) Apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s85):

No apologies had been received from Rotherfield Parish Councillors.

Cllrs Michael Lunn and Jessika Hulbert (Wealden District Council) had tendered apologies.

c) Declaration of personal, prejudicial, and disclosable pecuniary interests on items on the agenda, and updates to members' register of interests.

None.

3. RECEIVE REPORT FROM THE 11TH NOVEMBER COUNCILLORS' SURGERY, CONSIDER RESIDENTS' VIEWS REGARDING THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO HOUSE ASYLUM SEEKERS IN CROWBOROUGH ARMY CAMP AND RESOLVE FURTHER ACTIONS.

Documents relating to this item had been circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting.

Six members of the public addressed the Council and raised the following points:

- No quality impact assessment had been carried out on the condition and proposed use of the site.
- Members of the public with personal experience of the site are concerned that the site contains a large amount of asbestos.

Last Edit: Wednesday, 26 November 2025 - 1:47 pm

Clerk: Adam J Hardy, 3 Trinity Mews, Mill Crescent, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2QU

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- Those housed at the site will be free to come and go from the site. Research shows that at least 10% do not return to the camp.
- The effect the plans will have on the local doctors' practices. Particularly with the Rotherfield Parish practices being required to register at least 50 asylum seekers each. Concerns that appointments will take double or triple the time of a standard appointment. Despite the Home Office assurances, the plans will have a noticeable impact on the local health services.
- The loss of the camp for use by the local cadet forces.
- Security of residents in Crowborough and the surrounding towns and villages. A lack of funding and resources for an already overstretched police force.
- The number of 540 asylum seekers at the camp is misleading, as it is a rolling program.
- Concerns for the safety of schools and those travelling to and from school.
- Concerns that, given the amount of money being spent on the site, the camp will last longer than the twelve months proposed.
- The government's proposals will change the nature of Crowborough and the surrounding towns and villages.
- Concerns that the government can act in this way when planning applications are refused on the grounds of the Ashdown Forest 7km zone of influence. It is understood that this Special Protection Area applies to Crown Land.
- Any representation the Parish Council makes should also consider the health and well-being of the asylum seekers. The Council should recall that the local areas have already welcomed the families of Afghan interpreters and Ukrainian families.

The Chair asked Councillors for their views:

Cllr J Gosney felt that there was total confusion regarding this situation and that the government had made up its mind and nothing we could do as a Parish Council could change that.

Cllr P Beach agreed with Cllr Gosney that the situation seemed like it had already been decided. He added that residents have very valid security concerns. The public has expressed these to the Parish Council, and we should, as a minimum, communicate these to the Home Officer and other stakeholders. Everyone deserves a place to live, but the infrastructure at the camp in the surrounding areas is not in place to support the government's plans.

Cllr D Johnstone reported that he had been on the first protest march and heard very valid concerns from residents, including some from the parish. One of the residents' key concerns was that the irregular migrants could come and go from the camp as they pleased.

Cllr J Richardson felt that we faced a fait accompli. The mental health of the many youngsters from Crowborough and the surrounding areas who use the army camp through the cadet forces will be a cause for concern. The well-being of young people must be something the Council has a duty to lobby for.

Cllr D Hiles added that any site containing 600 people would create tension. He added that he would not be able to support a Council statement that dehumanises asylum seekers.

Cllr B Johnstone said that she felt that the Council needed to decide whether or not to oppose the government's current proposal for the Camp. She recognised that reducing the issue to a binary choice posed some difficulties as it is important not to lose sight of the humanity of the irregular migrants but at the same time this plan will have a direct effect on the parish's residents and there are many valid concerns, which the Council should reflect by opposing the government's plan. The Standing Orders of this Council state that the Council may consider any Motion that specifically affects the Council's area or its residents, and therefore she felt the Council should clearly should represent their views and oppose this particular policy.

Cllr P Turner felt that it was not for this Council to oppose or approve of the government's plans. He would support a letter or statement expressing residents' views.

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Cllr P Kember agreed that this Council should not vote on a motion to refuse or oppose the government's plans. However, he would support a letter passing on residents' concerns. If a motion to oppose or approve was called, he would abstain.

Cllr D Johnstone replied by saying Parish Councillors are elected to represent the residents, and the residents are clearly opposed to this.

The Chair addressed the Council, saying that he believed this would have an adverse effect on our local health services, particularly GP services. There are no plans for additional policing or to address residents' security concerns. The Parish Council does have an overriding duty to be the community voice and to represent its residents, and residents who had contacted him were scared for their own or their families' well-being. In addition to making the Home Office aware of our residents' concerns, he would be happy to have a motion to oppose these plans. However, he would accept a vote on a mechanism to inform the Home Office of residents' concerns and express our severe disappointment at the lack of consultation with surrounding towns and parishes.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk write to the Minister of State, Alex Norris (MP), and other stakeholders expressing the concerns of the residents of the Parish of Rotherfield regarding the government's plans to house 540 asylum seekers in Crowborough Arm Camp.

The key points will be taken from the views expressed at the public meeting on Tuesday, 11th November, this Extraordinary Parish Council meeting and correspondence received. They will cover the following:

- Health Service Impacts
- Additional Policing
- Security and Mental Health of Residents
- Security and Mental Health of Asylum Seekers
- Security of Local Schools
- Changes to Place
- Safeguarding of Cadet Forces and Possible Alternative Locations
- Proximity to the Ashdown Forest.

4. TO CONSIDER AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS AND OTHER PLANNING MATTERS.

- a) **WD/2025/2157/F - The Pharmacy Flat, 24 High Street, Rotherfield, TN6 3LJ**
8 replacement upper floor windows.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Wealden District Council that this application be **APPROVED**. The Council had no further comments on the application.

- b) **WD/2025/2111/LB - Warren Farm, Warren Farm Lane, Eridge Green, TN3 9JG**
Demolition of the modern farm buildings and conversion of the curtilage listed buildings (to include some extension and alterations) to provide 6 no. Dwellings with parking provision and soft landscaping

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Wealden District Council that this application be **APPROVED**. The Council had no further comments on the application.

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- c) **WD/2025/2296/FR - Southern Heights, Burnt Oak Road, Stone Cross, Crowborough, TN6 3SJ**
Retrospective change of use from annexe/ storage buildings to mixed use as annexe/ storage buildings and business use for dog walking and home boarding, together with use of associated garden land for dog exercise in connection with the business.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Wealden District Council that this application be **APPROVED**.
The Council had no further comments on the application.

- d) **WD/2025/2396/F - Bower Cottage, New Road, Rotherfield, TN6 3JR**
Proposed two storey rear/side and single storey rear extension.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Wealden District Council that this application be **APPROVED**.
The Council had no further comments on the application.

5. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING FROM WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

i. Decision Notices.

- **WD/2024/1076/LB - The Kings Arms, High Street, Rotherfield, TN6 3LJ**
Removal of external fan housing, including partial replacement kitchen window. Partial installation of new internal kitchen extract duct now to terminate via new opening in existing balcony deck with duct, extract fan, silencer and ventilation cowl mounted on existing balcony, and associated works. Installation of snow guards to all exposed eaves. Replacement guttering, hoppers and downpipes in cast iron. Works to windows including replacement ground floor window to north-west elevation, repairs to external elevations and associated internal works.

Recommended for **APPROVAL** by Rotherfield Parish Council and **APPROVED** by Wealden District Council.

- **WD/2024/1141/F - The Kings Arms, High Street, Rotherfield, TN6 3LJ**
Removal of external fan housing including partial replacement kitchen window. Partial installation of new internal kitchen extract duct now to terminate via new opening in existing balcony deck with duct, extract fan, silencer and ventilation cowl mounted on existing balcony, and associated works. Installation of snow guards to all exposed eaves. Replacement guttering, hoppers and downpipes in cast iron. Works to windows including replacement ground floor window to north-west elevation, repairs to external elevations and associated internal works.

Recommended for **APPROVAL** by Rotherfield Parish Council and **APPROVED** by Wealden District Council.

- **WD/2025/2056/LDE - Blackdon Cottage, Danegate, Eridge Green, TN3 9HX**
Stables, hay barn and garage for equestrian use and related storage. Equestrian sand school.

NO COMMENT was made by Rotherfield Parish Council, and the application was **APPROVED** by Wealden District Council.

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- **WD/2025/2085/F - Rotherhurst Bungalow, Cottage Hill, Rotherfield, TN6 3JJ**
Erection of garage.

Recommended for **REFUSAL** by Rotherfield Parish Council and **REFUSED** by Wealden District Council.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND DECISIONS FOR THE YEAR TO 31ST MARCH 2026

Total number of applications considered by the Parish Council	58
Decisions awaited	15
% of Applications decided where Parish and Wealden DC decisions agree.	83.3%
% of Applications decided where Parish and Wealden DC decisions disagree.	16.7%
Number of Planning meetings in the year (or planning business combined with other meetings)	11
Average number of applications considered per meeting	5.3

ii. Planning correspondence.

None.

iii. Any enforcement, conservation or appeal matters.

Enforcement:

Councillors asked for an update on Wealden enforcement regarding the caravan in the field at the bottom of Station Road.

Conservation:

None.

Appeals:

Appeal Notifications:

None.

Appeal Decisions:

None

6. DISCUSS AND CONSIDER A RESPONSE TO THE SUSSEX NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY.

Documents relating to this item had been circulated to councillors in advance.

Cllr B Johnstone reported on the webinar that she and the Clerk had attended. It was **AGREED** that Cllr B Johnstone would prepare a response to the consultation and the Clerk would circulate it to Councillors for approval.

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7. RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY.

The Clerk reported that he had received the DRAFT Housing Needs Assessment Survey Results report. It will be circulated to Councillors for consideration at the January 2026 Parish Council Meeting.

8. TO AGREE ON FIVE POINTS FOR THE COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY DOCUMENT.

1)	Rotherfield Parish Council will write to Alex Norris (MP), Minister of State at the Home Office, to express the concerns and views raised by residents.
2)	The Council will respond to the proposed Sussex Nature Recovery Strategy, which has identified areas of the parish that could be classified as Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity.
3)	The Parish Council was pleased to hear of the approval of the Kings Arms planning applications. The Council is committed to supporting all the pubs in the parish.
4)	Through planning policy, the Council is committed to supporting the development of local businesses and rural enterprises.
5)	Councillors attend training on making effective planning representations and were recently updated on the Ashdown Forest 7km Zone of Influence.

9. TO RECEIVE NOTICE OF THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Full Council - Thursday 27th November at Rotherfield Community Hub (Memorial Institute) at 7:30pm.
Planning & Environment Committee - Tuesday 2nd December at Rotherfield Village Hall at 7:30pm

10. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF ANY URGENT ISSUES FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS.

- The Clerk reported that work on the DRAFT Budget for 2026/2027 was nearly complete.
- The Clerk asked that all Councillors notify the Administrator if they are able to attend the Christmas party.
- The Clerk reported that Rotherfield Primary School was having difficulty in finding volunteers to sign up for the new lollipop person scheme. If any Councillors feel they could help out, please get in touch with the school.
- The Clerk reported that we would instruct James Valentine to fill the grit boxes across the parish.
- Cllr P Turner asked if East Sussex Highways could be chased about repainting the Keep Clear Box at the top of New Road. **Clerk** to chase East Sussex County Council.

The Chair declared the formal business of the meeting closed at: **20:38**

.....Chair.....Date

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