**NORTHERN ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCILLORS’ REPORT DECEMBER 2023**

Firstly, we would like to wish our Parishioners and Clerks a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

We recently attended a meeting with members of the public, Rother council officers, members and MP Sally Ann-Hart at Staplecross for the Rother Rural planning Roundtable, where the Rother rural economy and various matters about the countryside, employment, housing, and grants that are available were discussed.

Slides have been sent to your Parish Clerks, if anyone wishes to view them.

**REPORT FROM OUR LOCAL PCSO’s**

There have also been various burglaries in the areas just outside our ward, so the police are asking everyone to be alert at this time of year and report anything suspicious.

**Northiam**

02/11/23 – The Openreach roadside cabinet outside Coplands Plat was broken into and 4 x backup batteries were stolen.

30/11/23 – In the early hours of the morning, a vehicle parked along Main Street had its rear window broken and a several tools were stolen.

**Beckley**

01/11/23 – A property along Main Street had a stone birdbath, a small fir tree in a pot and a metal watering can stolen from the front garden.

23/11/23 – A farm in Moore Lane had 2 sheds broken into and several tools were stolen. The day before a vehicle was seen on the land acting suspiciously.

**Bodiam**

10/11/23 Bodiam Road -Several outbuildings and mobile homes were broken into and tools and machinery stolen.

27/11/23 New House Lane – A workshop on a farm was broken into and quad bikes tampered with.

27/11/23 Bodiam Castle – There has been an attempt to break into buildings in the grounds.

**COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT SCHEME LAUNCHES TODAY**

A new Rother capital community infrastructure grant launches today, funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

The fund is aimed towards projects which invest in activities that enhance community physical, cultural and social ties and amenities.

Projects that could benefit from the grant scheme might include EV charging points for community use; community energy schemes such as scaled up biomass, heat pumps or solar; capital grants for kitchens in community hubs.

* Grants of up to £20,000 will be available through the scheme.
* At least 20% of the total project costs should be in place with other funds.
* Grants are available to community groups, parish councils and charitable organisations.
* Capital projects only (see [eligibility criteria](https://www.rother.gov.uk/regeneration/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-community-infrastructure-grants/eligibility/)).
* Application window is open until the funding pot is allocated.
* Projects must be delivered and spent by January 2025
* Projects outside of Bexhill only.

For more information visit the web pages [Rural Community Infrastructure Grants – Rother District Council](https://www.rother.gov.uk/regeneration/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-community-infrastructure-grants/)

**Other REPF funding updates:**

* The second round of the **Spaces Improvement Fund** opens on the 1st of February 2024. This fund supports capital projects which improve community green and blue (water) spaces. For more information see  [Rural Spaces Improvement Grants – Rother District Council](https://www.rother.gov.uk/regeneration/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-community-grant-funding-information/)
* The **Rother Rural Business Grants Programme** will open in January. This is being administered by ESCC with a funding pot for Rother of £300,000. Grants will be available for rural businesses to apply for capital grants from £2,500 to £50,000 (up to 50% of project costs funded). We are particularly looking for rural businesses looking to diversify to make applications. Guidance information and criteria will be available shortly in the meantime businesses can register an interest in updates [regeneration.grants@rother.gov.uk](mailto:regeneration.grants@rother.gov.uk).

Please share this information with your networks. General UKSPF and REPF updates can be found [UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Rother District Council](https://www.rother.gov.uk/regeneration/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/).

The Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund (Rural Fund) is a top-up fund to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**ROTHERS BUDGET PLAN**

Residents in Rother are being encouraged to have their say on next year’s budget plans as the council faces continued financial pressures.

Local people and businesses are being asked to give their views via the annual budget consultation on how they would like the council to respond amid increasing demands on its finances.

High inflation and rising costs, coupled with central government funding reductions, means that Rother District Council faces a £3.8 million pound shortfall in its budget for 2024/25.

With uncertainty about how local government will be funded in the future, the council is aiming to cover the shortfall in a variety of ways including sharing services, increasing income, and saving money on back-office services.

However, given the predicted budget shortfall over the next financial year the authority will have to change the way it delivers, or even stop, some of its discretionary services.

Cllr Doug Oliver, Leader of Rother District Council, said: “We face an extremely tough situation with a £3.8m shortfall next year. As with councils up and down the country, our revenue budget, or everyday spend, is coming under increasing pressure.

“Just to give residents an idea, our spending on homelessness and temporary accommodation has more than tripled over the last four years to £2m, or 11 per cent of our net revenue budget.”

The Council’s budget proposals include increasing council tax by 2.99 per cent and increasing the fees and charges for most council services by 6.8 per cent, which is in line with current inflation levels.

Raising council tax by 2.99 per cent would see the authority’s portion of the council tax bill for a Band D property increase by £5.94 to £204.54 a year and provide £300,000 towards the budget shortfall.

Cllr Oliver continued: “We do recognise that our residents are facing their own challenges as the cost-of-living crisis continues and people face mortgage pressures and difficulties meeting day to day living expenses.

“But it is worth noting that less than 9p in every £1 residents pay in council tax goes towards Rother District Council services, with the rest going to East Sussex County Council, the Sussex Police Crime Commissioner, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and the Town and Parish Councils.

He added: “Our task is to continue to provide the services our residents want and balancing the books. This is where our residents can help by giving their views via our consultation as we work towards setting a budget in February next year.”

People can take part in the consultation by visiting www.rother.gov.uk/budget24. The consultation runs until Sunday, December 17.

The results of the consultation will be considered when the final budget proposals are debated by cabinet and full council in February.

Nov 2023

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| [**FUNDING BOOST FOR LOCAL SWIMMING POOLS**](https://eu-west-1.protection.sophos.com?d=prgloo.com&u=aHR0cHM6Ly9lYXN0c3Vzc2V4LW5ld3Nyb29tLnByZ2xvby5jb20vbmV3cy9mdW5kaW5nLWJvb3N0LWZvci1sb2NhbC1zd2ltbWluZy1wb29scw==&i=NjQ1ZGY5NDdlODk0ZjgxNzcyMThmNTRi&t=SklqSTBKejFyOTZGaFRnWXFNUFhwYXV2elRFZ0JTR3pzRWErRVoyanpJYz0=&h=d6c056f717bd4cf782b7c9e62299750f&s=AVNPUEhUT0NFTkNSWVBUSVZ_UrNI-fqeQN_yQDv1rilVbJHVVy1mjFZ_TyLeJUm1qHzrkTlbV5Hc-jVhhTj_27Oy5utKC6z7sCiZvGc9x0k5PT1D0b5jJeg-wdfkiY2RFA)  A GRANT worth £128,354 has been awarded to Rother District Council to support two pools in the district.  Bexhill Leisure Pool and the swimming pool at Rye Sports Centre will each receive grants of over £64,000 to help ensure the continued provision of opportunities for residents to swim and take part in water activities locally.  The funding, which will contribute to the pools’ utility costs, has been awarded after the council successfully applied to phase one of the government’s Swimming Pool Support Fund, administered by Sport England.  The fund was launched to support public leisure facilities with swimming pools which have been adversely affected by rising costs, leaving them vulnerable to closure or significant service reduction.  Both swimming pools, which are run by Freedom Leisure on behalf of the district council, are used by many residents to keep themselves fit and healthy, and by local schools for swimming and water skills lessons.  The council and Freedom Leisure have recently announced the reopening of Rye swimming pool after soaring energy costs forced its temporary closure in 2022.  For up to date information about Bexhill Leisure Pool or the pool at Rye Sports Centre visit [www.freedom-leisure.co.uk](http://www.freedom-leisure.co.uk)  **Contact Information**  **Saffron Phillips**  07762 409961  [saffron.phillips@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto://saffron.phillips@eastsussex.gov.uk)  **ROTHER’S TREE POPULATION**  is set to be boosted thanks to funding to mark the Coronation of King Charles III.  Rother District Council has been allocated £76,173.50 from DEFRA’s Coronation Living Heritage Fund, to create green spaces and connect communities with nature.  The money will be used to establish urban micro woods and community orchards, which will have a positive effect on the local environment and the health and wellbeing of residents.  Part of the funding will enable Rother District Council to offer grants to local organisations and community groups to cover the costs of a new community orchards of at least five trees.  Further details of the grants are set to be released in spring 2024, but it is hoped that community orchards will become a focal point for community activities, bringing people together to plant and cultivate a variety of fruit or nut trees.  The other part of the funding will enable the district council to plant three urban micro woods in winter of 2024/25. The woods will be around the size of a tennis court, planted with a variety of native trees and shrubs in a way that replicates the natural process of forest regeneration, promotes fast growth, increased resilience and reduces the need for ongoing maintenance.  While locations for the micro woods are yet to be confirmed, any organisations interested in registering an interest in volunteering to support planting are invited to contact the district council’s Climate Projects Officer at [climate.emergency@rother.gov.uk](mailto:climate.emergency@rother.gov.uk)  For information about the district council’s environment strategy and the action it is taken to tackle climate change, visit www.rother.gov.uk/strategies-policies-and-plans/environment-strategy/  **Contact Information**  **Karen Bowles**  **01273 337291**  **07919 298427**  **karen.bowles@eastsussex.gov.uk**  Kind Regards,  **Cllr. Tony Biggs Cllr. Tony Ganly**  Northern Rother   |  | | --- | |  | |