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Report to Parish Councils – June 2022

This report is written in early June and is for Parish Councils meeting in June. It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother.

Some of the items here are from information circulated by ESCC but which may not have drawn the attention of parish councillors and others.

Surgeries

I and the district councillors covering each parish are seeking to arrange surgeries where we would be available for consultation on any matter. These have been run successfully in some other towns and villages.

We would expect these to be on a Saturday morning and include your district councillor(s) and myself. One possibility is to seek an indication of questions in advance so that residents be directed to the appropriate person and perhaps to arrange appointments to avoid queuing, but I now believe that it is easier for people to simply turn up, though there might be queues. Feedback from parish councillors and others on how this should be run is welcome.

Well Done

I am completing this report on the Sunday afternoon of the jubilee holiday. I have attended jubilee events in the 5 largest parishes (sorry Bodiam and Rye Foreign) and all have been impressive. Each parish tended to have a different approach, but all required much hard work

by volunteers. I think everyone involved should be very proud.

Chairman's Teas for Volunteers

I have now sent a first list of recommendations to the Chairman's office but only from 2 parishes. This may not be as good as tea with the Queen (only bears from darkest Peru get that privilege now) but they are a recognition of the importance of volunteers in East Sussex. May be some of those who worked on the Jubilee events should be nominated.

The first event will be in early July so please send me details of anyone you think deserves an invitation. It should include their name, contact details etc in full confidence. I will pass these to the Chairman.

Cases

Each month I will give summaries/updates for a sample of current cases across Northern Rother. I currently have about 16 which are being progressed. For ones which have been on this list for some time, this month's updates are shown in italics.

- **Flooding in Northbridge Street, Robertsbridge.** This continues to be a top issue with Huw Merriman's office dealing with National Highways, me dealing with Highways East Sussex and Councillor Sue Prochak dealing with Rother district council. There is some small progress – for example Highways East Sussex have raised a drop kerb which was enabling relatively small amounts of rain to go into some back gardens, but the main response needs to come from National Highways. More interim measures have been taken – for example there are now sandbags down one side of the A21 to help prevent water from land coming across the carriageway, into the layby and then to Northbridge Street. (Footnote – not checked but I believe these may no longer be needed as the blocked ditch has apparently been cleared). Immense pressure is being put on National Highways by Huw's office. One challenge is assessing if measures are working given that flooding does not occur every year and seems to depend on a combination of factors. Recent experience has apparently been good, with no evidence of flooding.

National Highways have completed the surveys though are waiting the detailed report, though the drains do appear to be clear. However, they have found a number of other issues including infilled ditches and pipework which they are addressing. We should have another update in July.

Homewood School Bus Service

A number of children from Northiam, Beckley and Peasmarsh apparently attend Homewood school in Tenterden and travel on the 294 service provided by Hams Travel. Hams have said that this will be discontinued at the end of June. I understand that it is a discretionary service and it is also complicated because the school is, of course, in Kent.

I spoke last week to the East Sussex Lead Member for Education who is looking into it, but I think I may need to contact Kent County Council. I have to say I am not hopeful of a satisfactory outcome but this will cause significant expenditure and inconvenience to parents who then have drive to Tenterden and back twice a day. It would be helpful to know the numbers who travel on this service, though I will also contact Hams. Could clerks or others let me know of numbers if possible.