

# RDC Update for Brightling Annual Assembly 2021



Starting with finances, the pandemic has placed even greater pressure on our resources. We already had to make over £3 million in budget cuts over the next five years. The extra costs from the pandemic this year will exceed an additional £3 million. We expect most of this to be funded by the Government but not all of it. We are currently forecasting reserves to fall from £17m in 2019 to £3.169m by 2023/24.

More detailed information on the Council's finances can be read in our medium-term financial plan. You can find our strategy, past and current budgets on the Council's website at <http://www.rother.gov.uk/article/1059/Budgets-and-accounts>

During the first lockdown in 2020 the Council set up the community hub in partnership with many parish councils and local community groups. Subsequently, we changed our approach but continued to play a co-ordinating role. There were other calls on our resources, for example our Environmental Health officers were very busy supporting and advising local food businesses about the new restrictions and our Housing Needs teams were busy making additional arrangements for homeless households.

We have also been helping local businesses and charities throughout the pandemic with the payment of business support grants. Something in the order of £30m has been paid out and this will continue as long as the pandemic continues to impact our local economy.

Some service delivery such as planning applications had been affected in the first lockdown but new working methods brought almost all services back to normal. All our committee meetings are held online and can be seen live on the Council's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1YJ8D2hTTd2fFQFuBnTyGA> or on the relevant meeting agenda pages on our website.

**Corporate Plan** In last year's Parish Notes we promised to consult on our Corporate Plan in the summer of 2020. Unfortunately the pandemic got a little in the way and our consultation started on 4 February and ends 17 March 2021. All town and parish councils received an invitation to have their say on our proposed 10 objectives and initial actions plans.

**Housing** You can read the progress update on our Housing and Homelessness Strategy (adopted 2019) on our website [Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 29 November 2020](#). We've been working hard to address local concerns about housing, working alongside our partners.

In 2020 we established a new housing company Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd to deliver 1,000 new homes in the next 15 years to get the housing market moving. This will be a mix of homes for sale, part owned and rented and for affordable rents. A three-year business plan has been approved.

In an average month in 2020/21 we had 75 households in temporary accommodation. About a third are placed in Rother and the rest in Hastings, Eastbourne and Kent. This is an increase of 23% on the previous year. Our new housing strategy committed £3 million to buy our own temporary accommodation in Rother.

- a. We continue to have 1,700 households on our housing register (all with a local connection).
- b. Last year (2019/20) 114 new affordable homes were built. For 2020, 58 new affordable homes were completed from April to December in Bexhill and Ticehurst. This includes three homes compliant to wheelchair accessible standards at Ticehurst. We expect a further 27 affordable homes will be completed between January and March 2020. In 2021/22 we have developments for 105 more affordable homes with important sites around Battle and Icklesham.

**Food Hygiene** Nearly 99% of Rother food businesses are broadly compliant with food hygiene standards, scoring three out of five or higher. In addition, nearly 76% of food businesses have been awarded the top score: five out five. There are 989 food businesses in Rother from cafes, takeaways, pubs and restaurants to your local grocery shop, supermarkets and even care homes and they are inspected by our Environmental Health team.

**Waste and Recycling** The proportion of household waste that goes for reuse, recycling and composting remains consistent at 50%.

**Fly tipping** We have had 783 fly tips reported to the Council between April and December 2020. This is already more than 40% more than all of 2019/20 and the highest amount for years. We detected 36 fly tips, by finding evidence during our investigations that helped us take action to prevent further offences.

**Car Parks** We are undertaking a review of car parks in light of the introduction of civil parking enforcement in Rother in 2020. Due to lockdowns it has been more difficult to gather data on the impact on our car parks so work will continue in 2021.

**Corporate Programme Projects:**

The proposals for Blackfriars (Battle) have been developed with sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of the design. Blackfriars seeks to balance environmental factors to create a place which can enhance its setting and become an attractive, welcoming place to live. The master-planned design encapsulates a positive approach to all aspects of sustainable, community-driven design. 200 new homes will be provided, including 42 affordable rented properties and 28 homes for shared ownership. The principle of creating a Community Land Trust to provide housing in perpetuity for the local community is being explored, while the balance of open market units will provide opportunities for families, first time buyers, and downsizers. The Reserved Matters Planning Application was submitted in November 2020 and will be determined at RDC's Planning Committee in the spring.

Architects have been appointed to start early-stage feasibility and design work on council-owned sites in Camber and Rye, with two sites each capable of steering around ten units being explored.

Alongside this, an exercise to procure architects to work up detailed design proposals for 52 new residential units to the rear of the former High School site has begun. It is hoped that a design team will be appointed in March, and a Reserved Matters Planning Application will be submitted in the winter.

