

# Tressell Ward councillor's report

from Peter Chowney

6<sup>th</sup> October 2017



## Hastings Issues

### Rail Summit

Amber Rudd's fourth rail summit was held at Hastings College this morning. Speakers included Southern Rail, South Eastern Rail, Network Rail, Hugh Merriman MP, Paul Maynard MP (Rail Minister), and Mott Macdonald, who have been putting together the business case for bringing high speed trains to Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne.



The two local rail providers talked about proposed capacity improvements to trains up to London and along the south coast. There will be an 'overlapping split' to the service on the Brighton-Ashford route, where the short diesel trains will run from Eastbourne to Ashford, and a fast electric service from Hastings to Brighton, to replace the current short diesel train service that runs all the way from Ashford to Brighton, and is currently the only fast Hastings - Brighton service.

The goal for high speed trains via Ashford is a 66-minute service to London - 66 minutes to 1066 Country ... it has an attractive symmetry.

Mott McDonald talked about how the economic case for high speed trains is better if they go all the way to Eastbourne, rather than just Hastings and Bexhill. They didn't explain why that makes sense, and I don't understand that yet, as the high-speed trains to Eastbourne via Ashford will be slower than the current Eastbourne - London service. The Mott McDonald report will be available to read in detail on the East Sussex County Council website shortly.

Network Rail talked about a 'phased introduction' of high speed train services to Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne, with the first stage, potentially, being re-modelling of Ashford station to allow trains on the London line to join the Marshlink line to Hastings (at the moment, there is no physical connection between these lines). They said this would best be done as part of track works already planned at Ashford this autumn. The next stage would then be improvements to the Marshlink track, bridges and other infrastructure, and the third stage could be the full or partial electrification of Marshlink. However, Network Rail would not be funding this

work, or only in part – the rest would need to come from ‘third party investment’ – however, no costs were mentioned at all, these are still strictly confidential, it seems.

Paul Maynard MP spoke in support of high speed trains to Hastings, but made no specific commitments. He talked about technological advances in train design, and said that the Hitachi high speed electric trains with battery back-up for non-electrified tracks were currently being trialled, and would be available soon. The implication of this was that these new trains, coupled with partial electrification of the Marshlink route, were a possibility. However, there was still no indication of how much it would cost, and how it could be paid for. The new trains would have to be paid for by the train operating company – there was a hint that this could be a requirement in the next franchise tender, but again, no promises.

So high speed trains to Hastings via Ashford remain a possibility, which Hastings Council will continue to support. But how much it will cost and who will foot the bill is still unknown.

### **Sports Village**

The proposed Sports Village on Bexhill Road has moved a little closer with recent developments. This would involve creating a major sports development with 4G pitches, facilities for many different sports including cricket, a new sports hall, and



a new relocated stadium for Hastings United, on land that is currently football pitches off Bexhill Road. The development would be funded by using the current Hastings United ground, Horntye Sports complex, and land behind Bexhill Road, between the road and the sports village, for housing development.

There will be a public consultation on the scheme by the developers soon. A website with the details of the scheme, inviting comments on it, is being set up, and there will be three consultation drop-in sessions too. These are:

Wednesday 25th October 2017 – between 5pm and 8pm, Horntye Park Sports Complex, Cornwallis Suite, Bohemia Road, Hastings, TN34 1EX.

Thursday 26th October 2017 – between 5pm and 8pm, Hastings United Sports & Social Club, The Firs, Elphinstone Road, Hastings, TN34 2AX.

Friday 27th October 2017 – between 4.30pm and 7.30pm, West St. Leonards Community Centre & Social Club, 130, Bexhill Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea, TN38 8BL.

There will then be a report to Hastings Council cabinet in December (probably), potentially recommending the sale of HBC owned land needed for the project (including the sports village itself), subject to planning permission. The sports village is actually in Rother rather than Hastings, so it will be their planning department that makes the decision.

## **Big Sleep**

I enjoyed participating in The Big Sleep event on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, spending the night in a cardboard box on The Stade open space in support of the Seaview Project.



It was fun, as well as worthwhile. The support Seaview provides to vulnerable homeless people and street sleepers is essential, and I'm

very pleased the council can fund their outreach programme. But I was also pleased to see so many people helping them by spending the night in a cardboard box, drawing attention to the plight of rough sleepers and raising money through sponsorship – a total of £23,000, which goes a long way towards helping Seaview with their work.

As sleeping out in a cardboard box goes, this was luxurious, in a secure compound with soup and coffee to hand, not to mention acoustic music sessions. It was a warm, dry night too. But life for rough sleepers isn't like this - it's tough and dangerous. So I was very glad we were all able to help Seaview to continue their excellent work.



## **Angel Awards**

The Source BMX Park has been nominated for a Historic England 'Angel Award' for rescuing an abandoned historic building and putting it to a new use. Hastings Council originally teamed up with Rich and Marc Moore, who already ran a local skateboard and BMX business. The council funded the clearance and basic refurbishment of the building, and

The Source paid for the fit-out costs. Now, the abandoned White Rock Baths has become a thriving indoor BMX park, hosting events that bring thousands of visitors to Hastings, and viewed by hundreds of thousands online.

To find out more, see a nice video featuring Rich and Marc (pictured), and vote for them to win the Angel Award, go to:

<http://bit.ly/2hSHtsb>

## Hastings Pier



The pier's cashflow problems have been in the press recently, with the trustees agreeing to bring in an administrator to restructure the organisation and produce a business plan to make the pier's future financially sustainable.

Although the summer weather this year wasn't bad, several of their major income-earning events were rained off, which has given them financial problems. Also, piers are very

expensive to maintain and insure (even the newly-refurbished pier needs constant replacement of bolts that hold it together, and quickly rust away), before all the other running are considered.

The council will be working with the pier trust and the administrator, including the potential for permanent structures on the pier, which could help to put on year-round events that were less weather dependent. Any decisions on the future of the pier are, however, in the hands of the pier trust, who own the pier, rather than the council – but we'll help in any way we can.

## Selective Licensing Scheme

Next Monday's council cabinet meeting will consider a report on the selective housing licensing scheme, which was introduced two years ago. The scheme lasts for five years, but will hopefully be renewed after that, as it has been very successful at tracking down bad landlords and ensuring basic safety standards are met in rented property in the wards covered by the scheme.



Over 6,000 properties have now been licensed, or have applied to be licensed. However, it's estimated that perhaps another two thousand properties remain unlicensed. The council has now begun prosecuting landlords who have failed to license their properties. In the future, these fines will be retained by the council rather than the courts, which will help to fund the scheme.

For the first six months of the scheme, the council offered an 'early bird discount' for landlords that signed up. More landlords took advantage of that than expected, which has left a shortfall in funding for the scheme. This will be made up by increasing the cost of the licence for those who haven't licenced their properties yet.

The scheme means that all properties are inspected, so tenants don't have to report disrepair to the council – something they're often reluctant to do, because they believe they might be evicted. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to identify all the private rented accommodation in the selective licencing wards – there are no existing records of which properties are rented. For those landlords that have refused to licence so far, it's likely that most will be picked up by housing officers going door-to-door, and by local people and councillors reporting homes they believe to be rented, but might not be licensed.

To see the full report on the scheme, see the council's cabinet agenda:

<http://bit.ly/2wBpf0P>

At the same cabinet meeting, a report on a new licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) will also be considered. This replaces a previous scheme, and will be more closely integrated with the selective licensing scheme. HMOs are often in poor condition, and dangerous: during the original licensing scheme, 90% of the HMOs inspected failed to meet fire safety requirements. Considering you're six times more likely to die in a fire if you live in a HMO, and sixteen times more likely if you live in a HMO above three stories, it's easy to see why these inspections and licensing schemes are so necessary. This report is also on the cabinet agenda, if you'd like to read it.

## Tressell Issues



The Frederick Road 'road-to-nowhere' (old St Helen's hospital site) is finally being brought forward for development. This was sold to local developer Gemselect early last year. Now they're organising a pre-application planning forum, which allows them to consult the public on their proposals before they submit a planning application. The Frederick Road forum will take place on:

**30<sup>th</sup> October at 6pm in Muriel Matters House (the council offices on the seafront, entrance via the Tourist Information Centre),**

At the forum, the developer presents their plans, residents' groups and councillors can ask questions or make statements, then after a break everyone gets a chance. If there are a very large number of people there, the local councillors co-ordinate the questions to be asked in the second half – I will be there to do that. Usually, the plans will not have been circulated before the meeting, so they'll be as much a surprise to me as they will be to everyone else.

Ore Community Land Trust held its AGM at the Salvation Army Hall last Saturday, which was attended by about 50 people. They reported good progress with

Speckled Wood, having tracked down some landowners there. The council has also agreed to transfer a couple of small parcels of land it owns to OCLT. This will begin the process of land assembly, although funds will have to be raised to do this. They were also enthusiastic about the prospect of taking on other open space in the Ore Valley, and the possibility of accompanying funding. For more details, see the Tressell Councillors website.

I've also updated the website – it includes more recent pictures of Tania and I, amongst other things!

Recently, we've delivered newsletters to Oakfield, Sandown, and School Roads, and talked to residents along there. You can see all our newsletters at:

[www.tressell.org.uk/tressellnews.htm](http://www.tressell.org.uk/tressellnews.htm)

That'll do for now – if you'd like more information on any of this, leave a message on 01424 451066, or e-mail at [cllr.peter.chowney@hastings.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.peter.chowney@hastings.gov.uk)

We also have a Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/tressell](http://www.facebook.com/tressell)

And there's the Tressell Councillors' website at:

<http://www.tressell.org.uk>