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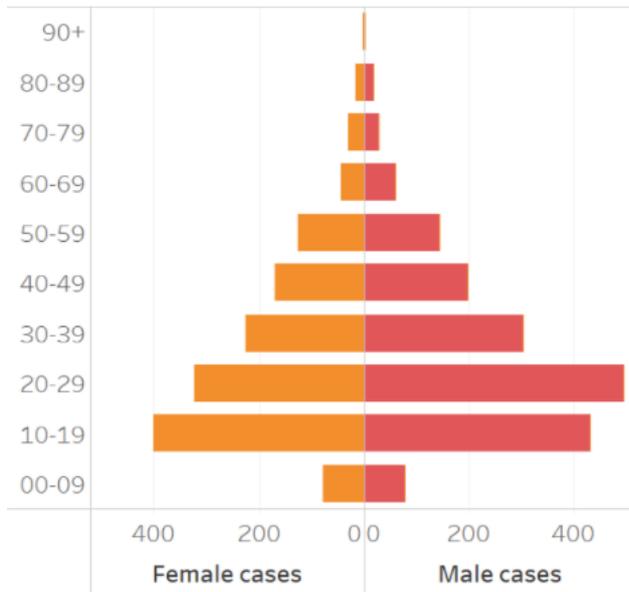
2 August 2021

Report to Parish Councils – August 2021

This report is written in late July and for Parish Councils meeting in August. It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother. I may on occasion add parish-specific supplements.

COVID update

As of 26th July, East Sussex had 2033 new cases in the previous 7 days which is a major increase compared to a month ago in line with the rest of England. In terms of cases per 100,000 population, East Sussex is 365, the South East 443 and England 532. On 20th July there were a total of 16 cases in hospital which is a relatively low number. This is in line with the national trend where the rate of hospitalisations for each case is much lower, due to vaccinations, natural immunity and perhaps the younger age of people who are less likely to be vaccinated. This is illustrated by the age distribution of cases in East Sussex shown below.



The local trend is for case numbers to decrease in line with national trends which is hopeful but caution needs to be applied to these trends which may have been affected by factors such as school holidays.

We are all hoping that the end is in sight, though some level of COVID seems likely to be with us for many years.

Council Meetings

The first full council meeting of ESCC was held on Friday 23rd July. (The previous one in May was very short and just to appoint membership of various committees). Key business was to review the priorities for the current year and the report from the cabinet. There were also two motions:

- To make 20 mph the default speed limit through the county
- To commit to making the operations of ESCC carbon neutral by 2030 instead of the current plan of 'before 2050'

I voted against each and they were defeated. Although I support 20mph in selected areas, a blanket limit would not actually reduce speeds in many areas. Experience shows that if typical road speeds are above 24mph at a particular location, a 20mph limit requires additional traffic calming measures which have significant budget and other implications. Enforcement can help of course but only in limited ways given the limit on resources. I am in favour of selected 20 mph speed limits, particularly in some of our villages. I welcome comments and views.

On the climate motion, I voted against as there was no technical or budget plan to suggest how this could be achieved. I am a strong supporter of action to reduce carbon emissions through my personal conduct. I also donate time to developing the web site for a climate action charity, though I should disclose that the charity was founded by one of my children.

ESCC is estimated to be responsible for about 3% of CO₂e emissions across East Sussex and has a plan to reduce CO₂e emissions by 13% a year which is being delivered. Even so we have some major challenges ahead in continuing to do this. For example, cement

production is responsible for about 7% of CO₂e globally. We use cement for road building, new roads and buildings. Hopefully technology will develop new ways of reducing emissions and budget support from central government will help in some of the significant expenditure this will require.

Cases

Each month I will give summaries for a sample of current cases across the Division.

- **Grass Cutting.** I reported on some dissatisfaction with grass cutting in several parishes last month and am still working on this. There is no doubt that the growing season this year has been unusual, with a wet June causing much more growth than normal, but I am looking to see how we can improve this. I am also obtaining maps of locations in each parish as it seems likely that some areas have been missed.

As a reminder, if there are urgent grass or hedge issues, in particular causing visibility or other safety issues, please let me know but also report them at

<https://www.eastsussexhighways.com/report-a-problem>.

- **Northiam School Crossing Patrol.** I have been working with a Parish Councillor on an appeal to local businesses to fund this. One very generous sponsor has come forward who would fund this for at least 3 years. We expect to finalise and announce this soon.
- **Robertsbridge High Street Traffic.** There is some concern about HGVs and similar causing vibration issues in some areas and also about speeds. I am working with the Parish Council and county officials to look at this.
- **Flooding in Northbridge Street, Robertsbridge.** The long-suffering residents of several properties in this street had another incidence of flooding in December. Much of this seems to have been flow down the A21 Silverhill, into the layby and down the footpath into Northbridge Street. Huw Merriman has put pressure on Highways England who have made some curb changes and added a gully as an immediate fix, with a series of other actions planned over the next few months. His office continues to monitor this. In addition, I am working with District Councillor Sue Prochak to look at additional measures as additional lines of defence which could be considered in Northbridge Street itself, which is the responsibility of the county. I am working with county officials and Highways East Sussex on these.

I should add that I am aware of a number of other local incidents of flash flooding which occurred during the recent thunderstorms. Although sometimes this may just be bad luck, where there are systematic issues with roads, drainage or other causes please raise them with me as remedies may be possible.