

## **Northern Rother District Councillors' Report July 2024.**

We recently received the following email from London Hearts:

I just wanted to share the fantastic news that applications are now open for our new UK Exclusive Internal Defibrillator Scheme.

London Hearts has launched this scheme with the aim of increasing the number of AEDs to help save lives. As a charity we understand it is not always possible to install a public access Defibrillator and people's needs differ particularly in the workplace.

The fund is moving far quicker than we initially anticipated given the limited funding requirement, so we are allocating on a first come first basis as to avoid any disappointment. Anyone in your constituency can apply, including the council. Would you be so kind to circulate with residents in your constituency? Funding of circa £660 per unit is required.

🔗 Interested? Apply using the link below! — <https://londonhearts.org/defib-scheme/>

<https://londonhearts.org/article/lh-launches-new-defibrillator-scheme-to-help-save-lives-across-the-uk/>

Facebook Link to the Scheme to Share -

<https://www.facebook.com/LondonHearts1/posts/pfbid0VtehyLLPq8U3yWF5xuoztJTA5r1vrMasnEdNnnYjxRk5kPQukH3XAvZQbkKn9XTWI>

## **Battle Festival**

Battle Festival is an arts and music festival in Battle, East Sussex. Now in its eleventh year, Battle Festival has quickly become a cultural gem in the South East's calendar, With its diverse, family-friendly focus, the Festival programmes an eclectic range of events and activities by internationally acclaimed, award-winning artists.

The Festival maintains a firm commitment to community engagement and education.

Alongside the programme of events, it runs an extensive range of workshops and demonstrations designed to develop and mentor talent.

In order that a festival of this size and quality can continue in such a small town, we need to have your support. There are lots of ways that you can help from volunteering time to individual giving and sponsorship.

To find out how you can help the Festival go to the Support Us page. Together we can ensure that Battle Festival continues to bring exciting new cultural opportunities to the town for the benefit of all.

## **Glydes Farm & Little Midge Open Gardens**

**Wednesday 17th July 10:00 – 16:00**



We're delighted that this beautiful garden will open to the public to raise funds for us – Friends of Conquest Hospital - on Wednesday 17th July. Please pop a note in the diary and come along to enjoy these stunning gardens. There will be teas, coffees, scones, cakes and light lunches available for purchase, and we'll also have a tombola. We are very grateful indeed to the owners of both properties for opening their gardens so generously for us. We're looking for volunteers to help on the day (and in setting up the day before too), as well as for baking cakes and scones for us to sell. If you're interested in getting involved, please email [angie@conquestfriends.co.uk](mailto:angie@conquestfriends.co.uk). We'd love to hear from you!

## State of the District Report 2024.

Rother's average (median) age had increased by three years, from 50 to 53 years, the highest average (median) age in the Southeast and a higher average (median) age than England (40 years).

- Rother's age structure showed the working age population to be 51% of the population, with under 16s 17% and over 65s 33% of the population.
- 21.6% of the population were classed as disabled, compared with the national average of 17.3%.
- Employment rates were generally above regional and national averages, but gross median weekly pay was lower. Rother's average individual salary was £31k per annum, which was 17.5% lower than the England's average salary of £38k and the trend in this gap was increasing.
- 38% of the Rother working age (aged 16-64) population had a degree or higher, which was below the 43%-degree qualification rate for England and 11% had no qualifications.
- 73% of housing in Rother was owner-occupied, compared to around 61% nationally, 16% in private rented (21% nationally) and only 10% in social housing (17% nationally). The ratio between house prices and wages was also significantly higher (12.2%) than the national position (8.3%); and
- Broadband (BB) gigabit capability at premises was 52% compared to 75% nationally, with 5G at 55% compared to 74% nationally.

## Housing Ombudsman's Special Report into Southern Housing

A special investigation report was recently issued by the Housing Ombudsman into Southern Housing.

The report found a complete lack of ownership in the complaint-handling culture. In the report, the Ombudsman had issued determinations on 77 cases, making 184 findings with a maladministration rate of 79%.

Regarding complaint handling, the maladministration rate was 92%. The report covered events occurring between October 2018 and September 2023, with 14 complaints involving events post-merger.

The report identified seven key themes and made recommendations to improve in those areas, namely, complaint handling; reasonable adjustments; unreasonable behaviour and contact restrictions; risk management; repairs; managing agents and third parties and knowledge and information management.

It was noted that prior to May 2019, Southern Housing (previously known as Optivo / AmicusHorizon / Rother Homes) had routinely presented to Members via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; officer operational meetings had been on-going since 2019.

It was noted that a meeting was being held the next day between Senior Council Officers, the Leader and Deputy Leader (who was standing in for the Housing Portfolio Holder who was unable to attend) and members of Southern Housing's Leadership Team. It was agreed that following this meeting, Southern Housing would be invited to an informal Member Briefing session prior to reinstating regular attendance at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.