



Downland Villages Ward : MSDC

Geoff Zeidler : Councillor's Report – 6th January 2024

MSDC Update

At the Council meeting on 13th December District Plan was approved with all but one independent member voting for it to progress to Reg19 consultation. The Council has also released its draft 2024-25 Corporate Plan and Budget for consultation.

District Plan

At Council, ahead of the vote, I asked the Leader to confirm that MSDC would still be able to reduce the housing numbers included in the Plan if changes to the NPPF allowed. When confirmed, I highlighted that as just one of 48 Councillors, over 56% of all the proposed housing would fall into the newly created, rural Downland Villages Ward. I said that having sat on the Working Group and Scrutiny Committee which had both unanimously approved the District Plan as the only effective way to meet the Government targets, I clearly had to vote for it as I believed that – damaging and disproportionate as it is – the Plan contains many excellent policies which may still offer a basis to ensure the quality of development and mitigate the numbers at the Planning Application stage; and that both the Council as a whole and local residents would be better off than with no plan.

The revised NPPF was published a couple of days later and made clear that there was no basis on which MSDC could rely to reduce its housing targets; and that DHLUC was taking action against Planning Authorities who had not progressed in Planmaking.

I understand that many residents may feel that this is contrary to my election commitment to avoid overdevelopment; and I apologise to all in the Downland Villages Ward that I have been unable to do more to reduce the housing allocation.

The next stage will be a Reg19 public consultation that will start on 12th January for 6 weeks. Responses are limited to ensuring that the plan is “Sound” and “Legal” and is not an opportunity to amend any of the specific elements. If approved by the Inspector next year, then all sites will still need to go through detailed assessment when they submit planning applications.

It is at this stage that such issues as traffic design; the existence of protected animal species; and the proper consideration of all the Council's Policies would be managed. These may limit the final number of houses that could be built; and will be where I believe pressure to fully comply with the policies in the Council's new plan can be applied most effectively.

Services

There have been no significant changes to services.

Infrastructure

Southern Water are arranging for a meeting with residents of Sayers Common on 16th February at 12.30 – 2pm in the Sayers Common Hall. There have been 3 occurrences of foul water flooding into houses in the last 3 months and we are working with Andrew Griffith MP to get confirmation of the action Southern Water are taking to maintain the pumping station.

Parish Issues for DC Support

Common Issues

Verge Clearance. The new contractor has started with responsibility for grass cutting and I will be pressing for clearer schedules to be available. The latest Infrastructure Spending report in relation to s106 money is now available.



Albourne (*Next meeting – 9th January*)

The focus has been the District Plan engagement and the possible re-siting of the re-Wilding area. I am supporting an application for a sympathetic extension at Curtains Cottage.

Fulking (*11th January*)

The date for appeal in relation to un-approved development at the Small Acres site is set for two days starting on Tuesday 27th February 2024. The PC is also seeking funding to renew playground equipment.

Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common (*25th January*)

The focus has been on the District Plan engagement and Reeds Lane flooding (above). Separately, we are looking to improve the state of the Pond at Berrylands Farm which was reviewed by the MSDC Park Rangers in the autumn.

Newtimber (*23rd January*)

Common issues on speeding with Pyecombe, Poynings and Albourne. There has been confirmation that SDNP see no enforcement issues at Little Acorns, but we are investigating the safety of the entrance with WSCC. We are seeking to improve communications about spoil deposition and bunds for sound management.

Poynings (*10th January 2024*)

Awaiting feedback from WSCC on issues including speeding and road re-surfacing.

Pyecombe (*16th January*)

There was a meeting with the Cabinet member and Director of the Open Spaces strategy on 6th December to discuss options as to how to assist the Play area and a plan is under development. This will also include discussion of previous MSDC commitments to repair the road. MSDC organised an additional road and pavement sweep of leaves following the storm.

Twineham (*8th January*)

Focus remains on planning issues in relation to the BESS scheme and the District Plan. The plans for permanent stabling at Hickstead were approved with plans for improving traffic flows in 2024 noted.