ANDREW GRIFFITH MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR ARUNDEL AND SOUTH DOWNS

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Malcolm Llewellyn
Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council
Trinity Road
Hurstpierpoint
BN6 9UY

8th January 2024

Dear Malcolm,

As we begin 2024, I write to wish you a happy New Year and to share with you some topics which your parish council may find of interest.

2023 was another busy year for all of us, defending our villages and towns against unwanted planning, finding new sources of funding to deliver projects, and shining a spotlight on community groups, businesses and schools. By working together, we can protect our rural way of life and all the things that make this area so special.

1. The Government's Community Ownership Fund

The window for the Government-funded Community Ownership Fund is now open and closes at the end of January with £25 million of levelling up funding available to go directly to community projects. If you have organisations in your parish that are looking to purchase, protect, or preserve a community asset The Community Ownership Fund is one source of funding they may wish to apply to. Applications of up to £2 million can be applied for (although most are expected to be smaller than this). Local groups and parish councils just need to be able to match fund 20% of the project. Whether it's the pub on the high street that's facing closure, a village shop or a local sports team that might lose its ground, the Fund offers a great opportunity for local groups to take them over and to run them as businesses – by the community, for the community.

It is a competitive process but even if a bid is not successful first time around, a delivery partner will be allocated to advise on potentially improving the bid so they can bid again. I would be happy to provide a formal letter of support to any suitable application and to do what I can to lobby Ministers on your behalf.

The fund is open to incorporated organisations or Parish/Town Councils (not district councils). More details may be found here:
http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus/community-ownership-fund-prospectus--3

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2. Planning Authority Local Plans

I am cautiously watching the latest Local Plans which are being put forward by all four of the district councils in my constituency – Horsham, Chichester, Arun and Mid Sussex.

On 19th December the Government changed the National Planning Policy Framework with immediate effect. The changes will give better protections for our South Downs communities that I've campaigned for over the last four years on behalf of villages blighted by over-development. It moves away from top-down housing targets, making clear the Government's view that these are now advisory. Other changes include greater weight for neighbourhood plans, protecting agricultural land, support for community-led housing development and scrapping the rule which allowed cities like London and Brighton to duck their own targets and 'export' development to neighbouring areas.

As Member of Parliament, I will be making my own submission to each of the Local Plan consultations, and this is a key way in which Parish Councils can have a 'voice'. I would be concerned to know of sites which have been rejected previously by the parish council making their way into the revised Local Plan. If there is an allocation included in your local plan which should not be included, and especially if you have assessed and rejected it previously, then please let me know.

While as a Member of Parliament I have no formal role in the planning process, I will continue to challenge unsustainable developments, especially where the infrastructure is already over-burdened just as we have seen in Barnham and Sayers Common and many villages in between.

I am pleased that we have successfully seen off three wholly unsuitable large strategic allocations in the constituency at Adversane, Mayfield and West Grinstead. I have recently called for a complete moratorium on further house building in the Arun district where we are now seeing the critical failures of sewerage systems and flooding because of excessive past development. We must insist on social and physical infrastructure being in place first before houses go up.

3. High Street car parking charges

Our hard-pressed small high street shops, pubs, cafes and restaurants have enough to contend with without District Council's hiking car parking charges and driving shoppers instead to large supermarkets or retail parks (which are also further afield, increasing CO2 emissions).

Our smaller town centre car parks need to be free or priced competitively to attract visitors and shoppers who will benefit the local businesses. Nationally, the Government is doing what it can to help including freezing the business rates multiplier for small business for a

fourth consecutive year, extending retail, hospitality and leisure relief, and freezing alcohol duty until next August. My view is that we need our councils to be acting responsibly by doing the same and freezing hikes not increasing the burden, and especially by not introducing new charges such as on a Sunday for the first time.

Hundreds of residents have already completed a survey to tell me what they think, and I welcome your own feedback on this issue.

4. Safer in Sussex Community Fund

Over the past few months I have met with some parishes to discuss anti-social behaviour. While the issues seem to be more prevalent in larger towns and cities, there are still pockets of this in our small rural villages and it can be even harder to deal with.

Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne who I have worked with has set aside some funding for local community groups that help reduce or prevent crime in Sussex. The Safer in Sussex Community Fund (SiSCF) has supported many projects over the past few years, to the benefit of local people and neighbourhoods. The fund provides financial support (grant awards up to £5,000) to local organisations and projects that aim to reduce crime and improve community safety. If you have a project in mind and want to apply, the next tranche is expected in May 2024.

5. Community Highway Schemes

I receive many letters from constituents seeking to reduce speed limits or introduce road infrastructure/signage to make local roads safer and quieter. I always emphasise that it is best if these have the support of the Parish Council or Village Meeting. A Community Highways Scheme is one potential avenue to delivery and I am pleased that Bury village had their scheme approved just before Christmas, to reduce speeds on the A29 from the Bury Common to Bury Hill. Anything to deter noisy motorcyclists here will benefit many other communities.

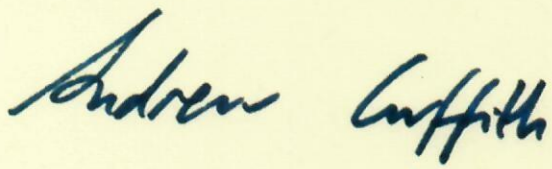
If you have a road scheme which has community support, please send me details or seek a meeting as I will always be happy to support and intercede with the multiple agencies whose help is required.

6. Email and newsletter

A reminder that the best email address to contact me on is andrew.griffith.mp@parliament.uk.

Finally, important information about my work in both Westminster and here in the constituency is in my monthly newsletter. If for some reason you do not already receive it, please sign up here: andrewgriffithmp.com/sign-up.

Kind regards,



Andrew Griffith MP