



Downland Villages Ward : MSDC

Geoff Zeidler : Councillor's Report – 5th February 2024

MSDC Update

The District Plan Reg19 consultation commenced on 12th January and concludes on 23rd February. The draft 2024-25 Corporate Plan and Budget anticipates a balanced budget for the current year but deficits in the future. Council tax increases are expected to be 2.95% and parking charges are being raised.

District Plan

Since the release of the revised NPPF there has been comment on the key paragraphs 60 & 61 which identify “exceptional circumstances” and legal opinion from one law firm states that:

*“New text has been added to the NPPF at paragraph 60, clarifying that the overall aim of local authorities, in the context of delivering homes, should be to **“meet as much of an area’s identified housing need as possible”**. Under paragraph 61, the revised NPPF also states that the standard method for calculating housing need, to establish the number of homes required, is now considered as an **“an advisory starting point”**. Under the previous NPPF, the standard method was not classified in this way and there was no similar explanatory text. As a result of these changes, local authorities have greater flexibility to plan for fewer or higher number of homes than the standard method indicates, and where there are specific local circumstances that justify an alternative approach to assessing housing need, that is now explicitly supported.”*

In addition there was a debate in the Commons on 23rd January which is reported in Hansard at [Revised National Planning Framework - Hansard - UK Parliament](#) which suggests that Ministers hope that Council’s will test the exceptions with the Inspectorate. As the Council Leader confirmed to me in December that MSDC would still be able to amend the Reg19 Plan if changes to the NPPF provided an opportunity to reduce housing numbers I am investigating how to progress this without exposing MSDC to the financial and development risks of “no plan”.

I will be submitting a response to Reg19 in which I expect to highlight the significant concerns about traffic and flooding in relation to the allocations; and if it is possible I will make a case for Mid Sussex’s housing requirement to be reduced as an exception due to the environmental constraint of available development land and the harm it would cause.

Services

The new Grounds contractor has commenced operations and service should be stabilising.

Infrastructure

Southern Water are joining a meeting in Sayers Common Hall on 16th February at 12.30 – 2pm which will be attended by Andrew Griffith MP. Residents have had visits from engineers and the new Engagement Manager has been more communicative. They have commissioned Electrosan surveys to be delivered by March 2024 to identify sources of groundwater infiltration; are visiting the site to inspect the Shripney Lane WPS and Reeds Lane Storage Tank and develop options for reinforcement; and will get flow monitoring to measure the incoming flows from specific areas of the catchment which they suspect may be sources of inundation.

Parish Issues for DC Support

Albourne (Next meeting – 6th February)

The focus has been the District Plan response and identification of the location for the possible re-siting of the re-Wilding area. There is also an appeal against the decision for car storage at Albourne Equestrian Centre.



Fulking (11th April)

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. I visited the site to understand the situation and have ensured communication between the Parish and the SDNP Planning team.

Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common (29th February)

The focus has been on the District Plan engagement and Reeds Lane flooding (above). I have met with Michael Nailard from the Flora & Fauna group and am seeking to get clarification of the MSDC plans for improving the state of the Pond at Berrylands Farm. We are investigating ditch clearance at Sayers Common and also the plans for drainage using s106 in Goddards Green area.

Newtimber (TBC)

Common issues on speeding with Pyecombe, Poynings and Albourne. We are investigating the safety of the entrance at Little Acorns with WSCC. We are seeking to improve communications about spoil deposition and bunds for sound management and this was clarified at the last meeting. We are clarifying the drainage problems in Church Lane to ensure that MSDC avoid flooding due to leaf blockages.

Poynings (6th March)

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

Pyecombe (5th March)

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 and we are promised a response in February. I visited the site which was discussed for development at the last meeting.

Twineham (11th March)

Focus remains on planning issues in relation to the BESS scheme and the District Plan. There continue to be enforcement issues at Twineham Grange Farm arising from light and traffic.