



Downland Villages Ward : MSDC

Geoff Zeidler : Councillor's Report – 8th March 2024

MSDC Update

The 2024-25 Corporate Plan and Budget was approved at the Council meeting on 27th February with the use of £343k from reserves. An amendment to reduce the proposed parking charges to be the same in each of Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead was defeated.

It is planned that next year parking charges will be introduced/raised in Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks after a consultation; and that double Council Tax will be introduced on second homes. The Medium Term Financial plan anticipates a significant deficit when the Government's Fair Funding Review and Business Rate Retention plan on the distribution of central government funding is finally completed.

The District Plan Reg19 consultation closed and the responses will be collated awaiting the appointment of an Inspector. I anticipate that there will be a report on the responses which will be shared.

District Plan & Planning

I was advised that the points raised last month on the revised NPPF will have no effect as it will not be the basis for inspection (para 230) and that "exceptional" circumstances only applies to the assessment of need and not requirement. Notwithstanding this I still submitted a response that considered the plan unsound. I am happy to share this with anyone who would like to see it.

I attended the appeal against SDNP's enforcement against the Small Acre site in Fulking. The result is expected in April but highlighted the change in definition of "Travellers" which may mean that MSDC's 2022 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment understates "need" by a significant amount.

Given discussions on a potential future development application in Pyecombe I reviewed the SDNP Plan 2014-33 [South Downs Local Plan - South Downs National Park Authority](#) whose key policies relating to development are the Spatial Strategy (3.1) which is for "a medium level of growth dispersed across the towns and villages of the National Park"; the establishment of settlement boundaries (7.9); the Housing Supply Policy SD26 (which identifies 0 homes allocated to Fulking; Poyning; Pyecombe and Newtimber) and the associated Windfall allowance which is 51 dpa (7.32). Any Windfall site will have to fully comply with all the SDNP policies although some categories (such as homes for older people 7.45) are seen positively. In terms of Employment this is outlined in SD34 and development will be supported if it supports the economic and social wellbeing of local communities with a focus on farming, forestry and tourism; but the land allocations in SD35 are very specific.

Services

There were no reductions in service planned in the budget and reserves to fund the implementation of improved recycling and waste collection are being accrued.

Infrastructure

There was a meeting with Southern Water to address the flooding issues in Sayers Common and the Sayers Common Village Society co-ordinated a multi-agency follow up meeting on 7th March which will focus on Ditch Clearance; Gully Clearance; and Southern Water's own investigation into the area. The findings have been shared to MSDC to inform the Reg19 consultation and specific issues in relation to Kingsland Cottages which is suffering foul water flooding are a key focus.



Parish Issues for DC Support

In light of the Parks Strategy Action Plan which offers limited prospect of support for Rural areas, and issues at the Wyshe in Pyecombe and Fulking I have been talking with the Communities Team about support that can assist Parishes to raise funds from third parties and specifically the role of the Community Development officers. At present the main avenues of support appear to be Trevor Leggo at WSALC (based in Hurstpierpoint) and the MSVA team who I intend to meet soon.

Albourne (*Next meeting – 3rd April*)

We are awaiting confirmation of a request to move the re-Wilding area to the centre of Barleycroft. There is also co-ordination with Steve White who is co-ordinating with WSCC on flooding issues in Sayers Common on the Gullies on Henfield Road.

Fulking (*11th April*)

The appeal in relation to the Small Acres site is due to be decided in the next few weeks. The hearing clarified the impact of the definition of Travellers.

Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common (*21st March*)

The focus has been on Sayers Common flooding (above). I have met with Michael Nailard from the Flora & Fauna group and MSDC plans for the Pond at Berrylands Farm are subject to review with Glendale Countryside as the new Green Spaces contractor. We are still seeking clarification around plans for drainage in Goddards Green area.

Newtimber (*TBC*)

We are seeking WSCC support in relation to the safety of the entrance at Little Acorns with WSCC. I am seeking to clarify responsibilities for drainage problems in Church Lane to ensure that MSDC avoid flooding.

Poynings (*20th March*)

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

Pyecombe (*7th May*)

We are still awaiting an update on how to assist the Play area. The prospects for development in Pyecombe are covered in the item on the SDNP Plan above.

Twineham (*11th March*)

Focus remains on planning issues in relation to the BESS scheme and the District Plan. The issues at Twineham Grange Farm arising from light have been addressed but the house, which was granted permission as 4 beds, is being marketed as 5 bedrooms. A TRO relating to Hickstead lane is being supported.