

Cornelie Usborne, Wealden District councillor, Horam & Punnetts Towns, Tel. 07979336401, e-mail: Cllr. Cornelie.usborne@wealden.gov.uk

November update to Parish Councils

Wealden Community Lottery celebrates the first six-month milestone supporting local community projects. Tickets cost £1 with at least 60% from each ticket sold goes to support the Wealden district. Since the launch of the lottery this March 2023, c £32,000 (£31,824.60) has been raised for good causes and the central fund combined. There are 910 players participating, 1831 tickets purchased per week and 74 good causes have signed up and are raising funds.

WDC would like to encourage all councillors to promote the community lottery in their local area to encourage local sports clubs, community groups, village halls, charities and other not-for-profit organisations to sign up to help raise funds, as well as encouraging local residents to purchase tickets to support good causes.

WDC's new Strategy

The Mission: WDC is to be an enabling and enterprising council working alongside our communities to create a greener, fairer, and kinder district for present and future generations.

The Three Priorities: Climate Change and our Environment; Local Economy; Community Resilience and Wellbeing. They all connect and overlap to ensure that **People and Nature are thriving**.

Full Council will debate and, it is hoped, pass, this on 22 November. For more details: <https://council.wealden.gov.uk/documents/s84503/Appendix%20A%20-%20Strategy%20Document.pdf>

Planning Decisions

Part of my role as deputy chair of Planning Committee South (PCS) is to listen carefully to the opinions of residents and the scrutiny of planning committees of parish councils in my ward. I do the same when it comes to making lead decisions every week whether a number of applications should be 'called in', that is to be discussed by the committee, or whether to leave the decision in the capable hands of the planning officers.

Local Plan

This is particularly close to my heart. Without it, we have less powers to control development. Last December, the previous administration suspended the 2019 draft plan when central government promised to scrap the housing quota and change the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other policies. Despite media rumours to the contrary, it did not happen, however.

Such legal uncertainty is a huge challenge for work on the plan; so is a national planning system which stops us serving our residents in the way we would like, or as is appropriate in this climate emergency. The reality of WDC's choice was between delivering a Local Plan which passes the Government tests and conforms to their very strict requirements, and not having a plan at all. But a plan is preferable to none. For c. twenty years, it will guide development, declare the vast majority of land safe from new housing and allow us to improve sustainability and design of buildings. It will be considered at a special meeting of Full Council on 8 February 2024, with the formal Regulation 18 consultation to take place in the following weeks (dates to be confirmed).

If you would like to receive all information relating to the new Local Plan, including any future consultations, please register here: <https://consult.wealden.gov.uk/kse/>.

This is, of course, subject to the potential publication of any update to the NPPF and the extent and direction of the final changes. However, the Alliance is clear that they want their plan to proceed. They intend, so far as possible, to resolve any potential tensions between their draft plan and any updated NPPF between regulation 18 and 19 and not further delay the plan.

Planning committees of parish council especially – but everyone else, too - can prepare now to be up to speed in February when they can exert influence in the evolving Local Plan. I suggest that the best and easiest way is to look at the withdrawn Local Plan 2019 (<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/A1.-Wealden-Local-Plan-January-2019.pdf>)

to understand the changes in the new draft plan. The 2019 draft is a bit unwieldy so best to start with the content page of the 600-page document and read the pages relevant to your parish. Also use the search button to see any other times when there are references to the villages in your parishes. If this has whetted your appetite why not go on reading more, possibly the entire document.

And ask questions or write suggestions to me. I will then feed this information back to Wealden before next February.