

December District Councillor Report - Cllr Emily O'Brien

Johny in his report has mentioned the upcoming South Downs Plan consultation, so just to mention briefly re the Lewes District Local Plan that we will be discussing at our next cabinet meeting a proposed reg 18 consultation going out to public consultation, but focussed on policies and some of the smaller sites as we are still waiting on the county council modelling re traffic so can't include any major sites. This means there would be a further reg 18 consultation next year once the modelling has come back. The proposed two stage consultation is in order to be transparent (as otherwise if we wait until everything is back, residents/parish councillors are not sighted of where the process is at) and in order to meet the needs of national government who require constant reassurance that the process hasn't stalled. It will also give slightly more weight to the emerging policies. It's frustrating to have to go out twice so I have asked that there should be clarity in the second reg 18 consultation as to exactly what has changed from the previous one to minimise the time burden on busy volunteers.

My cabinet role continues to be busy, we are currently budget setting. I've have a follow up meeting with the ESCC Director of public health over water quality and attended the Ouse Valley Climate Action Boar and the Food Partnership steering group. I've also been busy across the District including chasing Southern Water in Ringmer.

In my LGA (Local Government Association) role I've been busy pushing around the LGA's response around government proposals on 'devolution' (some might call it 'centralisation) and local government reorganisation including the likely abolition of District Councils in favour of unitary authorities, along with compulsory requirements to have combined authorities covering several such unitaries and headed up by elected Mayors. All of which we need, in my opinion, like a chocolate teapot. As a deputy chair of one of the boards LGA overseeing devolution I have been doing my best to point this out. It is now expected that the 'devolution' bill will land just before the Xmas break along with the equally controversial new National Planning Policy Framework. Only a cynic would suggest this is in order to hide bad news.

I am hoping to take time off over Christmas and new year with family (despite having to possibly plough through the above draft bills) so please bear with me if I am less available. For urgent queries that can't wait I can be reached by phone. I wish everyone a peaceful and happy Christmas with warmest wishes for the New Year.

Emily O'Brien (She/her)

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