

Local Updates

Public Consultation on Speeding. – Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council are hosting a public consultation on Tuesday 10th Jan at 7.30pm in Kelsey Hall

22/01726/FUL | Erection of 32 no. residential dwellings on land at Little Farm, Loxwood

This application looks to have in the region of 200 objections now. I have submitted my own objection to this. The officer assigned to this has told me that it will go to planning committee but is unlikely to be anytime soon as there are several issues with this application including water neutrality.

21/02849/FUL Land Southwest Of Willets Way Willetts Way Loxwood West

Sussex – The planning committee asked for this to be deferred to a future planning committee meeting to enable to site visit to take place. It was more likely that this will go back to planning committee in January and the site visit will take place on the Monday before however I have been told the applicant has now submitted an appeal.

22/02346/OUT Foxbridge Golf Club Development – I have had no further updates on this at this stage.

21/00466/OUT – Land West of Cornwood Townfield Kirdford West Sussex –
Awaiting an update from Andrew Robbins

22/03131/OUTEIA | Outline planning application for the erection of up to 492 dwellings - Crouchlands Farm

Northchapel resident reporting flooding in their property at Luffs Meadow:

Over the Christmas break I received an email saying water was pouring down a stairwell of a block of flats in Luffs Meadow and Hyde could not do anything about it. The resident had sandbags against their door to prevent water coming into their property. I discovered that the other three properties were empty in the block. I intervened and we got emergency services to break into the vacant property and sort out the water leak. CDC are investigating why three properties are vacant when there is a waiting list for residents to move into the area.

CDC Updates

Local Plan Update: We have received a working draft of the Chichester Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Local Plan which will be considered by DPIIP on 18 January and then as a final version by Cabinet (23rd) and Council (24th), the following week.

Advanced Digital Skills

This programme will launch to residents and businesses in the new year to help boost advanced digital skills in the county to meet an identified skills gap. The programme will link with training providers and the Sussex Local Skills Improvement Plan.

WSCC have appointed 'always possible' [About Us - always possible](#) to deliver this project. The project aims to kickstart:

- Raising aspiration and delivering exciting new opportunities for those considering building an advanced digital career in the county
- Giving West Sussex SMEs creative new ways to showcase future employment opportunities and opportunities for direct conversations with jobseekers, career pivoters, young people, mature workers and those reconsidering a London commute.
- Strengthening partnerships, joining up and enhancing existing initiatives, networks and engagement programme

Programme delivery will be from January 2023 across three spatial geographies (Coastal, Rural and Urban) and will feature a substantial media and social media communications campaign. It will deliver activity in each of the district and borough geographies through pop-up information hubs and roadshows. It also plans to deliver a digital futures symposium in the autumn .

Three SME businesses were offered the opportunity to work with the project, chosen through a competitive application process. They will help to shape the information and resources and will be the official 'voices' of the project for business-to-business comms and support the event programme.

A 'digital future' video campaign will be produced linking innovation in the county with 'place' and high-growth, high-salary opportunities. The videos will clearly define practical pathways and training opportunities.

Particularly aimed at the out-commuters and late career changers, a six-part podcast series will delve into 'world-leading tech on your doorstep', featuring interviews and exclusive stories and case studies about future-focused innovation happening in small and large businesses across the county.

All activity will be enhanced by the support of a comprehensive digital story-telling campaign. This will be delivered through a collaboration with 'Midnight Communications' who will oversee a 14-month programme of engagement with West Sussex residents and businesses through multiple existing social media channels.

Whilst this project will deliver new initiatives, it will also amplify the messaging of other projects in the county, signposting people to relevant partner activity, including training provision. At initial conversations with a number of partners (including Chichester College Group, Coast to Capital Careers Hub, Sussex Council of Training Providers, Gatwick Airport and Manor Royal BID) the project has been very warmly received and partners are waiting for opportunities to get involved, once the project launches.

The Economic Development Service will be promoting all the above three projects to businesses, utilising newsletters, network contacts and most importantly through the business contact programme.

Growth & Sustainability Officer

Derek Irvine was appointed to the role of Growth & Sustainability Officer in July 2022 but continued with existing Economic Development Officer commitments until a new Economic Development Officer was in post in October 2022.

The current focus of the role is on: -

- Supporting Businesses to operate and grow more sustainably
- Ensuring SMEs can leverage all available and relevant support eg the county-wide Green Business Support Programme
- Working with the Inward Investment Officer to attract new “Green Businesses” to District and to position the district as having a “green edge”

The Growth & Sustainability Officer is now on the steering group of the county- wide project to help SME Businesses prepare for a low carbon economy and will build on this work to expand its reach in our District

More than 40 business have been engaged with on where they are on their carbon neutral journey and ‘Carbon Leaders’ in the district are being identified.

Work is underway to explore networking options to support more businesses to engage with the drive to adapt to a reduced carbon future. Additionally, criteria for Sustainable Rent Concession scheme at St James have been agreed.

Sewer flooding

November and early December saw exceptionally heavy rainfall and a few residents experienced sewage surcharges as a result. Fortunately, no-one that contacted CDC reported sewage coming into their home. The public sewer network in the district is the responsibility of Southern Water and we understand they experienced exceptional demand for operatives to deal with sewer surcharges, creating delays in response for some residents.

Members have asked what recourse residents have to a regulator if the water company is not meeting its response targets, and whether the council has an enforcement role in this scenario.

The regulator for the Water Companies is The Water Services Regulation Authority (OFWAT) , which includes an advisory body for consumers - the Consumer Council for Water [CCW]. Residents should be referred initially to Southern Water’s own complaints procedure <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-advice/sewers-and-drains> or to CCW <https://www.ccwater.org.uk/> if unsatisfied with Southern Water’s

response. Vulnerable customers can register as such with Southern Water to receive a higher priority service.

The council has Environmental Health powers to deal with defective private drainage, for example, dealing with a landlord or neighbour that fails to attend to a blocked or surcharging foul drain.

Environmental Strategy Unit – new staff

Three new members of staff have joined the Environmental Strategy Unit. Mark McManus is job sharing the post of Strategic Wildlife Corridor

Enhancement Officer with Sarah Hughes, they are both part-time and Mark's usual working days are Mondays to Wednesday. Oliver Gammon has joined us filling the vacant post of Environment Officer (Projects). He will be working 15 hours a week on a variety of biodiversity related projects, including Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Brandy Hole Copse Local Nature reserve. Sara Osman started on 5 December in the new post of Specialist Environment Officer. She will be working on the communications and events actions in our Climate Emergency Action Plan and on domestic energy efficiency funding alongside the Housing team.

Elections:

The Elections Act 2022 is planned to be implemented from next year, and a number of changes are due to take place. This is to give you a brief update of those changes.

Voter ID – the Government has plans to introduce electors having to show identification at the polling station from the polls on 4 May 2023. Most electors will have an acceptable form of identification but if they don't, they are able to apply for a "Voter Authority Certificate" (VAC) through the gov.uk web portal or in person at the council offices. Staff in polling stations will not be able to issue a ballot paper unless identification or a VAC is shown. A large-scale PR campaign will start in the new year by the Electoral Commission and the Communications team at CDC. Poll cards will also be A4 size to allow for information on what must be shown in the polling stations to be put on them. More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-identification-at-polling-stations-and-the-new-voter-card>

First Past the Post – the voting system for any Mayoral or Police & Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales will be changed to First Past the Post.

EU citizens' Voting & Candidacy Rights (EUVCR) – the automatic right of EU citizens to register to vote, to vote and to stand in UK elections will be removed. However, two groups of EU citizens will retain their voting and candidacy rights and therefore remain on the relevant register: these are 'qualifying EU citizens' and 'EU citizens with retained rights'. Qualifying EU citizens are those citizens of a country with which the UK has bilateral voting and candidacy rights treaties. EU citizens with retained rights are those persons who have been resident in the UK or Islands since the end of the EU Exit Implementation Period (31 Dec 2020). As long as they have maintained unbroken immigration status, they will retain their voting and candidacy rights. Those that are ineligible will be removed in December 2023.

Postal & Proxy Voting Rule Changes (from July 2023) – there will be a new requirement for postal voters to reapply for a postal vote every three years instead of 5 years. There will also be new identity verification requirements for absent vote applications to try and make the system more robust and secure.

Overseas Electors Changes (from July 2023) – Overseas electors will be able to register at the last UK address they were registered at, or the last UK address at which they were resident if they were never previously registered. Currently electors living overseas are only entitled to register to vote for up to 15 years from leaving the UK and the new legislation removes the 15-year rule.

Postal Vote Handling Rules Changes (from Autumn 2023) – there will be a ban on postal votes being handled by candidates and campaigners. Postal votes being handed in to a polling station will also be limited to 5 and they must complete a form to establish who has delivered the postal votes and for whom.

These changes will deter fraud and will also deter candidates and campaigners from undertaking activity which is perceived to be linked to fraud.

At this stage there is very little detailed guidance on any of the changes involved but if you have any questions regarding any of the above, please get in touch and I will pass these onto CDC.

District Councillor Surgeries

Sat 14 Jan: Halfmoon Pub, Northchapel

Sat 28 Jan: The Stag Inn, Balls Cross

Sat 4 Feb: Onslow Arms, Loxwood

Sat 18 Feb: The Forresters, Kirdford

Sat 4 Mar: Old Mill Café, Wisborough Green I am also available for home visits or one to one meetings at alternative dates/venues upon request.

Get in touch! gbevans@chichester.gov.uk / 07958 918056.