D. Cllr Reports -October 21 Council Meeting

D. Cllr Lury

As you are no doubt aware , opposition councillors walked out of the last Full Council meeting at Arun District Council . Reasons for this were twofold - one being Councillor Roberts’ motion without notice to remove from the Constitution the ability to propose a motion to rescind a previous decision and the later decision to move any motions back to their relevant committees . One of the motions referred to the decision taken under so - called Urgent Matters to instruct officers to look at sale thereof . I specifically raised my unease at such undemocratic action , given that , by so doing , both councillors and the public alike had been disenfranchised as they had no previous notice of such an important vote . This , as I intimated , is a very slippery slope to embark upon and reminds me of the nineties when I was on Aldwick Council and the rotten borough decided matters prior to Council on the Bay Estate . This constitutes , in my view , a serious breach of protocol and I stand by all my comments !

Having attended Planning Policy last week I , a tad reluctantly , agreed to a pause ,’to be reviewed in six months’ time , of the Local Plan Review in light of Cllr Gunner’s assertion that newly appointed Michael Gove was going to radically dismantle some of The Planning Reforms. My only caveat was politicians say lots of things , but do not always deliver - we shall see !

District Councillor Martin Lury

D. Cllr Yeates

Dear colleagues

I am really sorry but I will not be with you tomorrow evening and would like to give my apologies now.

When Arun changed to the committee system in May this year, I opted to stay with Planning Policy, Residential & Wellbeing, and remaining on the Constitution Working Party.  However, I did sub on the Economic Committee last time and was asked to make this permanent.  Tomorrow night is, unfortunately therefore a clash and, as it is my first time as a full member of the committee, I do need to go along.  Quite surprised to be given this opportunity as it is a popular committee.  I have checked through to April next year, and there are no other clashes which is a relief.

Meetings of the service committees are approx every 5-6 weeks, so we are mid-cycle at the moment.  For Residential & Wellbeing, we looked at a potential premium on Council Tax on properties which have been empty for 2 years or more.  This was supported but I did express some concern that it needs to be ratified by Full Council and then would take effect next April.  Timing is quite short for home-owners to effect any repairs and get their properties ready for occupation if they are to avoid this surcharge (central Govt have set a maximum of 300% on properties unoccupied for over 10 years for example).  This could help with the housing numbers, especially if some are offered for rent, but it could also address problems where houses may become very run down if empty for long periods.

Last week we had Planning Policy where much of the debate surrounded the Local Plan review.  There is a need to review the L/P as housing targets have not been met.  Some work on renewing the evidence base has already been commissioned and we were asked to consider whether to continue with the previously agreed schedule or to pause, pending a Govt review of planning which the new Minister for Levelling Up Housing & Communities (prev MHCLG) has signalled.  Very difficult decision - I queried whether Arun could be disadvantaged in any Duty to Cooperate negotiations with other authorities in our Housing Market Area (includes Chichester, Worthing, Horsham, and as far away as Crawley).  I was reassured that, as other Local Plans proceed, we would have some warning.  I also suggested that we kept the situation under a 6-monthly review as it could be fast-changing. Other L/Ps are proceeding, however Adur & Worthing have not addressed their housing shortfall.  Chichester just announced that they are in the same situation but that this relates to lack of funding for the required infrastructure to support the housing numbers.

We also looked at proceeding with commissioning a study which could support a Coastal change Management Area for Pagham and interim arrangements regarding any new planning applications on certain estates.  Again this was supported although Members felt it needed to cover a wider area, definitely Climping but most of the coastline.  However, Pagham is the most critical.  I only mention Pagham because the strategic development sites there were bundled into an allocation with our West Bersted one, so it may be of interest.

On Wednesday this week, we have a special full council meeting to look at the arrangements for replacing our CEO, Nigel Lynn, who officially leaves at the end of this week.  It is unlikely that a permanent replacement could be found quickly, due to the extended notice periods required, and so interim arrangements will also be considered.  Will be able to report back on this next time.

Locally, the new businesses on Saltbox field at Shripney are opening up.  I have taken some photos for DL of Shripney for the business plan, but I also tried to take one of the late evening view.  I’m not a great photographer but I did really struggle with the amount of light pouring out of Aldi particularly.  Full marks to Starbucks who had turned off their illuminated sign before 10.30pm (maybe earlier, not sure what hours they are open).  It is something to consider perhaps, especially with the properties nearest to Bersted Brooks.  I’ve long been unhappy with the proliferation of illuminated signs but these are increasing in size and number at a terrific rate.  I am wondering whether this will have any effect on wildlife on the nature reserve and I’d really like to see a curfew, rather than have them blazing 24/7, and perhaps a restriction on size and number.

On a side note - excellent work by Debbie in securing support of supermarkets for the hampers.  Are we trying the Food Warehouse (Iceland) which is opening next Monday where Lidl used to be?  That makes an incredible 6 supermarkets all along the same stretch (and a similar number of drive-through food outlets).

Gill