

**Report from Cllr Michael Lunn, Wealden District Council representing  
Rotherfield and Hadlow Down  
August 2024**

Wealden District Council has been relatively quiet through the last few months partly due to General Election, which saw Nusrat Ghani elected as MP for Sussex Weald which is what the new constituency has been called. I do have dialogue with the Member of Parliament which I believe is important so if any Members of the community fail to get responses please do let me know and I will do my best to chase up and ensure you get a response. I can also confirm that Nusrat Ghani MP has been elected by the House of Commons to act as Deputy Speaker for the next 5 years. As a result she will be unable to answer questions to Ministers on the floor of House of Commons but will have greater access to get answers for constituents behind the scenes.

With regard to Wealden District Council, we have recently had Full Council and I did have the opportunity to raise concerns regarding planning resources, planning enforcement and the suggestions of the new Labour Government implementing higher Housing Targets and what the implications will be on the draft local plan. You can see my question and the response from Cllr Tysh (Green Party). Part of my reasoning for answering this question is I have been frustrated by the delays and false promises with regard enforcement issues.

[https://wealden.public-tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/890072/start\\_time/2131000?force\\_language\\_code=en\\_GB](https://wealden.public-tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/890072/start_time/2131000?force_language_code=en_GB)

I can now confirm that under the Regulation 19 Local Plan draft the number of houses 953 per annum, under Labours new plans this has risen to 1396 which is a 46% increase. Many Council Leaders across the Country have been extremely concerned yet the Wealden Leader Cllr Rachel Millward (Green Party) has been silent.

Since making this intervention I have had Chris Bending, Director of Place contact me regarding my concerns and I have now had an update which is with the clerk. I will continue to strongly defend the protection of the High Weald National Landscape and will continue to challenge poor democratic procedures. I have given the Clerk a confidential update on matters of fact but it would not be appropriate to make these public at this point in time.

### **Political Balance and Allocation to Committees**

As you will recall I reported to the Parish Council that at the last Full Council meeting no agreement was reached regarding the political balance of the Council. Since then two Members have resigned from the Lib Dem/Green Coalition and that has forced further changes, however there appears still no agreement and the calculations as presented by the Chief Executive/monitoring officer have been described as unlawful. For members of the public this is perhaps meaningless and a waste of time, but there are very clear national directions on how calculations are made. The outcome of the debate was quite frankly shameful, and I have never witnessed such poor Governance of Wealden District Council. The debate lasts approximately 1 hour and Members of the Community can watch the whole debate from this link. I personally described the situation as a 'mess'.

[https://wealden.public-tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/890072/start\\_time/3610000?force\\_language\\_code=en\\_GB](https://wealden.public-tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/890072/start_time/3610000?force_language_code=en_GB)

Although the proposals passed they are subject to legal challenge as the main Scrutiny Committee for Audit and Finance is to be chaired by a Labour Councillor, and even if that Labour Chair cannot make the meeting the Committee will not be chaired by the Deputy Chair but the secondary Labour Councillor where this should be one of the main opposition parties. In essence, it is now assumed that the Labour Party are actively supporting the Coalition. There is also much confusion over who is actually sitting on Committees. This will settle over the coming weeks until a legal challenge can be brought forward.

If any members of the Parish Council or members of the local community have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me [cllr.michael.lunn@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.michael.lunn@wealden.gov.uk)