

Parish bulletin

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Wealden Cabinet News 25 January 2016

Council Tax recommendation



Cabinet is to recommend an increase of £5 a year in the Wealden element of the council tax bill for a Band D property. Full Council will decide later this month, with proportional increases proposed for other property bands. "Our finances are in a very strong position. It has taken a lot of hard work. We have been very prudent," said Council Leader Bob Standley. "The Revenue Support Grant will have disappeared by 2018-19, and at one stage that was worth £3.5 - £4 million. We have absorbed those costs. The £5 a year Band D increase is the equivalent of just under 10p a week. I am not blasé

about the effect of an increase on people with fixed incomes but I think it is right to have the resource to be able to deliver the services to our residents." A total of 17 residents and one town council responded to the consultation on the Cabinet budget proposals and of the 17 individuals, 53% said they were in favour of the £5 year increase. The recommendation will now go to Wealden's Full Council meeting on 22 February for a final decision.

*For further information please contact Trevor Scott, Director of Governance and Corporate Services.
Tel: 01892 602524 or email: trevor.scott@wealden.gov.uk*

Constraints on affordable housing



Cabinet is recommending Full Council to approve a new housing budget which will see an additional 137 new council homes built, following on from the 88 the Council has already completed. "There is a desperate need for more social and affordable properties," said Councillor Graham Wells, Cabinet member for Housing. "Market rents have gone up and up and the amount of stock available to the people who are looking has reduced, so there is a need to produce more at social and affordable rents which would be below market rents. Last year we lost 18 properties through right-to-buy sales. I would like to be building more council homes but we are limited by a

number of constraints including a debt cap and the need, yet to be confirmed, to pay compensation to the Treasury for right-to-buy sales by Housing Associations." The Housing Revenue Account budget ensures the continuation of the Council's ongoing maintenance budget of £4.5million a year and also allows for the 1% reduction in all rents next year, in line with Government policy.

*For further information, please contact Amanda Hodge, Head of Policy & Community Services.
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Effective use of resources



The Council's finances have been given a clean bill of health by the auditors BDO who, for the financial year 2015/16, have approved the Council's finances and delivery of value for money without any qualifications. The auditors were satisfied that, in all significant respects, the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources for the financial year ending March 2016. "We are used to having good audit reports but this year's was a very good one and I would like the excellent work of our finance team to be noted," said Council Leader

Bob Standley.

*For further information please contact Trevor Scott, Director of Governance and Corporate Services.
Tel: 01892 602524 or email: trevor.scott@wealden.gov.uk*

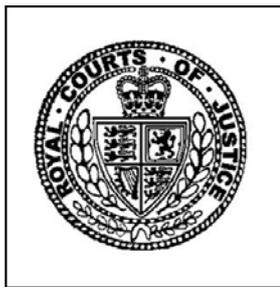
Members' Allowances

Cabinet is to recommend that Full Council increases Members' Allowance by £45 a year, an increase of around 1%. This would raise the Basic Allowance for Members from £4,386 to £4,431 a year. Special Responsibility Allowances, which are paid to Cabinet members, the Council Chairman and Vice Chairman, Committee Chairmen and minority Group Leaders, are also being increased by 1%. The increase follows the recommendations of the Wealden Independent Remuneration & Allowances Panel which noted that the Wealden basic allowance was in line generally with the average for district authorities in the area.

*For further information please contact Trevor Scott, Director of Governance and Corporate Services
Tel: 01892 602524 or email: trevor.scott@wealden.gov.uk*

Planning News

Wealden victory at Court of Appeal



The Court of Appeal has supported the decision by the Council's Planning North committee to refuse a planning application to build 103 homes at Steel Cross, Crowborough. "A year ago, we were successful at the High Court in overturning a Planning Inspector's decision which went against the Council, and would have allowed a development which, without suitable mitigation, would have damaged Ashdown Forest," said Councillor Ann Newton, Cabinet member for Planning and Development. "It is important for Crowborough and the people of the District that their elected representatives continue to guide development within the District through the accepted planning processes." On 1 February, the Court of Appeal dismissed two

appeals calling for the Planning Inspector's decision to stand, and refused permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. The Court of Appeal hearing took place on 18 - 19 October, 2016. The Appeal was brought by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Knight Developments.

*For further information please contact Kelvin Williams, Head of Planning and Environmental Services.
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[Hailsham Area Action Plan Steering Group](#)



Progress continues with the infrastructure improvements to support the growth in the south of the District envisaged in the Wealden Local Plan. The capacity to provide health care in Hailsham has been increased through the appointment of doctors and other health service staff, and NHS England has approved the funding bid by the Hailsham Medical Group for a new surgery in the Burfield Valley development off Battle Road, to be ready for spring 2019. Talks are taking place to secure a site for a new health facility in Polegate and further facilities are expected to be added in south Wealden to meet future demand.

Key studies are being prepared for the Revised Local Plan, which is expected to be published by the end of March. It is clear that growth in south Wealden will require infrastructure requirements resulting across a larger area, and this will lead to a new section in the Wealden Local Plan dedicated to the South Wealden Growth Area. The Hailsham Area Action Plan Steering Group will continue to play an important role in contributing to and delivering this.

*For further information please contact Nigel Hannam, Director of Planning Policy & Economic Development.
Tel: 01323 443230 or email: nigel.hannam@wealden.gov.uk*

[Leap Cross nears completion](#)



Wealden's latest council house development - an exciting mix of flats and houses in Hailsham - is nearing completion. The 12 home development is at the former Leap Cross industrial site. "We've included 3 one-bedroom and 3 two-bedroom flats in the mix to help cater for the increasing demand for smaller homes in the District," said Councillor Graham Wells, Cabinet member for Housing at Wealden. "We currently have 250 people on the Council's waiting list for housing in Hailsham and the majority are eligible for one or two bedroom accommodation. The ground floor flats feature floor-to-

ceiling glass windows and walled gardens while the upstairs flats benefit from balcony views. As well as six flats, the development has 4 two-bedroom houses and 2 three-bedroom houses. The Leap Cross development is expected to be completed in May 2017, with letting taking place in the spring 2017. The second phase of Wealden's New Build programme will see 101 new council homes built by 2020 in Crowborough, Hailsham, Uckfield, and Wadhurst.

*For further information please contact Hayley Frankham, Housing Development Team Leader.
Tel: 01323 443278 or email: Hayley.frankham@wealden.gov.uk*

[Enforcing on-street car parking](#)



Council leader Bob Standley confirmed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 January that the Council was looking at all options when it came to enforcing on-street car parking, but no decisions have been made. The matter is expected to be discussed at the March Cabinet meeting and he added that it was likely that parish and town councils would be involved in the discussions. He repeated his opposition to charging for both off-street and on-street car parking as free parking was important to maintaining the economic vitality of the District's towns and villages. Currently enforcement of on-street

parking control is the responsibility of Sussex Police, but they have stated it is not a priority. Any moves to decriminalise on-street car parking would have to include the additional expense of updating the kerbside yellow lines across the District. You can watch a webcast of Cllr Standley's statement at the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Wealden website](#).

*For further information, please contact Isabel Garden, Director of Environment & Community Services.
Tel: 01892 602404 or email: isabel.garden@wealden.gov.uk*

[Spot fines to crack down on fly tippers](#)



Fly tippers can now be fined up to £400 on the spot by Wealden District Council's Street Scene Officers. The fines will be useful in small scale cases of environmental crime when the only penalties available were cautions, warning letters and clearance costs. Large scale or multiple fly tipping offences will continue to be pursued through the courts as this still provides a more effective method of penalising offenders and deterring others. The courts can impose higher fines and offenders could face a prison sentence. Wealden's Street Scene Team has a successful record of investigating and prosecuting those who fly tip within the District, resulting in a lower number of fly tips annually than many other authorities in the South East. Household Waste Recycling Sites are located in Forest Row, Wadhurst, Heathfield, Crowborough, Maresfield and Hailsham. Details of Wealden's bulky waste collection service can be found on [the Wealden website](#).

*For further information please contact David Whibley, Team Leader- Planning and Enforcement.
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[Helping crack-down on child sexual exploitation](#)



Wealden & Rother's Shared Environmental Health service, together with Hastings, Eastbourne and Lewes local authorities, has provided four free training sessions for taxi drivers, pub landlords and other licence holders on identifying and helping to report child sexual exploitation. "Child Sexual Exploitation can happen as easily in Sussex as it did in Rotherham and Oxford," said Councillor Claire Dowling, Cabinet member Public Health & Community Safety. "Our licence holders play a pivotal role in safeguarding the public – it is because of their responsibilities that their professions are licensed.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has become an increasingly high profile issue, which can affect children and young people of all backgrounds and from all communities, right across the UK." The training sessions will also provide a valuable opportunity to increase awareness of other forms of abuse, including the identification and prevention of sexual assault in the Night Time Economy, as well as an introduction to the signs and indicators of Modern Slavery.

*For further information please contact Richard Parker-Harding, Head of Environmental Health.
Tel: 01323 443208 or email richard.parker-harding@wealden.gov.uk*

[Increase in food waste contamination](#)



The levels of food contamination in Wealden's recycling bins has risen to about 2.5%, which represents about half of all the contamination in the recycling bin. Although a small amount, it can be enough to result in the rejection of the whole 16 tonne load. Most residents are familiar with what goes in each bin - and this has been further helped by the free recycling stickers that were sent out to all residents before Christmas - but the problem seems to be with food waste left in some of the containers put out for recycling. This includes uneaten pizzas left in cardboard boxes, or takeaway food still in its metal containers. Items that should **not** be placed in the

recycling bin include food waste, nappies, textiles, hard plastics (e.g. flower pots), polystyrene, bubble wrap and foil lined plastic pouches. Wealden's residents are some of the best recyclers in the county, helping the District achieve an overall recycling rate of around 50%.

*For further information please contact Chris Bone, Waste Manager (Policy)
Tel: 01892 602724 or email chis.bone@wealden.gov.uk*

[There's so much to do in Wealden](#)



This year's *Wealden do the Best Attractions* guide, launched at Bridge Cottage, Uckfield, features 72 tourist destinations in the District. Activities include vineyard visits, climbing ranges, family-friendly fisheries, railways and country rambles, castles, cottages and a trampoline park with a unique ninja warrior assault course.

"Tourism supports 15% of the jobs in Wealden and we will be exploring new ways to encourage the returns it brings our local businesses at our Wealden Tourism Conference on 30 March at Herstmonceux Castle," said Councillor Roy Galley, Wealden Cabinet

member for Economic Development. 2017's *Wealden do the Best Attractions* is a handy fold-out guide which includes a map, contact details of all 72 attractions, listings of some of the main seasonal local events and a glimpse at the history of 14 of the places that make Wealden such a wonderful place to visit. The free guide is being distributed to hotels, tourist destinations, libraries, businesses, farm shops and garden centres up to a two hour drive from Wealden. It will also be available from tourist information centres nationally and can be downloaded from the Wealden website, www.wealden.gov.uk, just search for *Wealden Attractions Guide*. Day-by-day details of local events and visitor attractions are available at the Wealden do Sussex website.

*For further information please contact Jane Kilby, Tourism Officer.
Tel: 01892 602881 or email jane.kilby@wealden.gov.uk*

[The Great Wealden Spring Clean](#)



There's still time to join *The Great Wealden Spring Clean*, part of the nationwide great British Spring Clean campaign to smarten up local communities over the weekend of 3-5 March. "We are encouraging as many groups, individuals and organisations as possible to take part," said Councillor Roy Galley, Portfolio Holder for Waste and Economic Development. "Litter remains a huge problem across the country, causing harm to the environment and wildlife, with councils in England having to spend over £700 million on street cleaning services every year." Wealden is providing free volunteer clean-up kits containing litter pickers, bag hoops and gloves for adults and children and is distributing special edition waste sacks from our offices in Hailsham and from the libraries across Wealden. Waste contractors Kier are

helping by providing a special waste collection service for all the litter picked during the campaign.

To take part:

- Visit www.greatbritishspringclean.org.uk and register your event.
- Contact Wealden District Council by emailing pr@wealden.gov.uk or phoning 01323 443268 to request additional support.
- Alternatively if you'd like to run an event outside of the campaign dates contact Wealden District Council who will try to support you in any way possible.

*For further information please contact Chris Bone, Waste Manager (Policy)
Tel: 01892 602724 or email chris.bone@wealden.gov.uk*

Welfare benefits from partnership working



Over 3,000 people have received benefits advice through the Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford Clinical Commissioning Group's Welfare Benefit Project, helping them access £1.7 million in benefit income between April and December 2016. Some 2,413 people contacted the 0333 3440681 benefits helpline. The most common benefits enquiries related to Employment and Support Allowance, Council Tax Reduction and Personal Independence Payments. People with complex or multiple benefit issues received one-to-one case work support. Two thirds of these had one or more long term medical conditions and over a half were from the most deprived areas. Outreach sessions, half of which took place in GP practices or other NHS locations, helped provide 208 people with benefits advice and 142 people were identified as needing casework support. A further strength of the project was expert debt advice which helped 36 people in the Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford CCG area. Over £180,000 of debt was written off either directly or Debt Relief Orders. As part of the project, welfare benefits and awareness training sessions have been held for 10 NHS groups and 103 staff and patients as well as 23 sessions to other groups.

*For further information please contact Barry Cooper, Sussex Community Development Association.
Tel: 07977 336610 or email barry.cooper@sussexcommunity.org.uk*

Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration



The further development of Uckfield town centre, which had been expected to involve a major food retailer, has been paused pending a meeting in the summer of 2018. In the meantime the potential to redevelop and regenerate the town centre is to be kept under review. All the High Street trees will be provided with protective guard rails and work is underway to address any outstanding work from Stage 2 and some additional items. East Sussex County Council will be monitoring traffic flows after a settling in period of 18 – 24 months, timing to depend on any further works. Improvements to the bus station will be included in the ESCC draft work programme for 2017/18. Meanwhile Uckfield Town Council is being consulted on further transport measures to improve movement and access to the town's main transport corridors. The published minutes of the recent meeting of the Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Joint Committee can be found [on the Wealden website](#).

*For further information please contact Nigel Hannam, Director of Planning Policy & Economic Development.
Tel: 01323 443230 or email: nigel.hannam@wealden.gov.uk*



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