

## August Report – Emily O'Brien, District Councillor

Our full council meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> July passed motions regarding Southeast Water and also on enhancing air quality, both unanimous. More recently I addressed the appeal hearing in Falmer for the Ashill Regen development asking that the Inspector outlining my objection to this proposal. I've also been liaising closely with the Cabinet Member for Planning who has confirmed that the Thakeham appeal will be robustly defended. I am a member of the local plan steering group (where cross party councillors input into process) and continue to remind officers of the need to progress the next local plan, which remains challenging when on top of all the other obstacles, the promised guidance is once again delayed.

We have received info, as have the parish council, info on the Scottish Power solar application and would welcome hearing any parish council views on this. If you are inviting them to present would be keen to attend so can hear your views rather than have a separate briefing. I asked about their process for ascertaining agriculture value of land and whether they would be looking at any food production e.g. grazing alongside. They responded "Our ALC surveyor started their on-site survey today. Their survey will comprise undertaking soil samples to help determine the exact grade of agricultural land. Mapping provided by Natural England suggests that the site occupies land of Grade 3 agricultural land classification however the map does not differentiate between 3a and 3b land. The survey will be undertaken over the next week and across the whole site. We're more than happy to feedback results once we have these (likely in the next week or two). At SPR, we prefer to take a lead from the landowner on their preference for grazing, however I do believe they are keen to implement this on site. We hope to have a more established route for this in the coming months and can revert with more information once we hear back from the landowner. "

In my cabinet role we have had issues with our contractors not fulfilling their mowing duties in the District's parks and I'd like to apologise for anyone who has experienced this. The contractors are now on a stringent performance management plan and are almost back on track. I've also had a lot of complaints about verges and overgrown cycle and footways which I have passed to the county council. I've also asked for a review of how we manage the District-run cemeteries to make sure we are getting the right balance between managing for nature (e.g. Lewes cemetery is designated as a local wildlife site) and ensuring that these very special places are respected and that people are able to pay respects to their loved ones i.e. that sufficient areas are being close mowed, as opposed to being annually mowed in September to benefit wildlife. A reminder, as I am not sure this message is getting across, that if anyone is unable to access their loved one's plot they should contact the council and a mowed access path will be provided and maintained. You are also welcome to contact me personally to request this. I've also asked the review to look at signage and whether it is clear that this is an offer we make and also whether it's clear that there is active management for wildlife in the wild areas.

I'd also like to flag the current consultation which is taking place wrt the Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere. Lewes District Council is a partner and the Biosphere area currently stretches across half the district- however we have requested that the whole of the District (including Ringmer) should be included in the Biosphere area in future. If the Parish Council are supportive I wondered if you'd like to respond to the consultation at <https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/have-your-say-on-the-future-of-the-living-coast-unesco-biosphere>. The same website has lots more information about the Living Coast.