

Maria Caulfield's Update for Ringmer Parish Council

June 2023

Please accept my apologies that I am unable to join you at your meeting this week. I do, however, have the following updates for the parish.

1. New Sussex Police Officers

I am pleased to say that the government has met its pledge to hire 20,000 new police officers nationwide. Sussex Police has seen over 800 new officers helping to keep our streets safe. Sussex has also seen the reintroduction of community policing through its PCSOs and the creation of the rural crimes team.

2. National Tutoring Programme

The Government has announced it will raise its commitment to the national tutoring program and will now cover half the cost of the program. This scheme will see an extra £150 million available to schools across the country. This program aims to provide students who are performing below grade standards back up to the level of their peers. Over three million courses have started since the announcement of this scheme, and the UK has risen to fourth place in international primary reading literacy.

3. Speaking out against the end of day travelcards

I have spoken out against Sadiq Khan's plan to end travel cards for London. This plan would mean commutes throughout East Sussex will be worse off while simply heading to work. With a possible increase of up to £9.30 a day, the growing cost of travel to London is a concern I know many have on their mind. The government continues to support TSL as they have done since the pandemic, with over 4 billion pounds in subsidies since 2020.

4. Local Plans

Following on from last month's discussion about planning, I met with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove, to discuss our council's delay in providing a local plan. This plan will protect our green spaces and ensure that our area receives the housing it needs to serve its needs. Without a local Plan, Lewes and Wealden Councils will not be able to stop the planning inspector from overturning their decisions. This is a vital area that I know we must address to keep control over local planning.

5. Flexi bus service to go live

I recently met with residents in Deanland Wood Park where we got a demonstration of the new flexi bus service which will cover Chalvington and Ripe. The £43 million of government funding for East Sussex has been used to set up this service so residents in rural villages can have access to public transport.

The county is being drawn up into ten zones and you can call or book online a flexi bus service within your zone up to 30 minutes before you want to travel and up to 7 days in advance. Bookings can be made online, using an app and by telephone. You can book up to five seats per trip, subject to availability and services are running 7am to 7pm, Monday to Saturday.

There is no timetable and there is no fixed route within your zone, it is completely flexible based on demand. You can book for other zones too, but you will need to get to the zone for pick up and drop off.

For more information visit the Flexibus website <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roads-transport/public/flexibus>

6. Local Business Champions

I was happy to welcome Tom Stovold to No.10 for the Local Business Champions event hosted by the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt. These events are a fantastic opportunity to honour our local entrepreneurs and get their opinions on what the government could be doing better to support them in their future growth.