

## April 2024 Report - Emily O'Brien, District Councillor

### Good News on Dog fouling

Following concerns raised by residents and a similar query from Ringmer Parish Council it was clarified that dog fouling is no longer a Bye Law. The whole of Lewes District is however covered by a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for dog fouling, which means we could serve a fixed penalty notice on someone for not picking up - the problem though is of course catching them. I am pleased to confirm though that Lewes District Council's Neighbourhood first Team have agreed to provide extra signage and patrols for Ringmer to help tackle the problem.

### Update on HGV Action

Following the petition & protest in Ringmer, I'm pleased to say that East Sussex County Council have confirmed they have started work on a freight strategy:

*"I am able to confirm that since the Lead Member meeting of 25 September 2023, the County Council has commenced work on the development of the Freight Strategy for East Sussex. This includes a desktop policy review, and early engagement at the beginning of February with key stakeholders such as Network Rail, and National Highways to help inform the strategy ahead of a draft being prepared. ESCC will be doing further engagement on the preliminary draft to reach those stakeholders that were unable to attend the initial session, including district/borough councils and the freight industry.*

*The initial draft Freight Strategy is currently being developed with public and stakeholder consultation currently programmed to be undertaken in autumn 2024. The specific consultation start and finish dates are to be confirmed closer to autumn. The consultation will be publicised once it has commenced and will be available on the County Council's consultation hub: [East Sussex - Citizen Space](#)."*

### Water Quality

I attended an all-party parliamentary group which included Natural England and secured a commitment from them to sharing the Lewes Brookes SSSI action plan (following the assessment completed last April which showed deterioration) which includes actions for Southern Water, and to more transparent sharing of action plans going forward.

I've also secured a commitment from OFWAT and Southeast Water to hold a consultation event with Lewes District Council in Autumn around their proposal to extract water from the river Ouse to fill their proposed new Arlington Reservoir scheduled for 2050 - when the existing stress on the River Ouse is likely to be exacerbated by increased climate pressures.

Along with council officers and Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust in my cabinet role I took Southern Water representatives on a tour of our partnership projects there including the Scout Hut, Cheyney Field attenuation ponds, the Scout Hut and Kings Academy where there are rain gardens added to the downpipes. I was pleased that at the meeting Southern Water confirmed they intend to invest in similar natural flood management solutions in many of the areas which I've been highlighting including around £2.8 million targeted at Ringmer (screenshot of the handout they brought below\*). Obviously this is only part of the solution, and I'll continue to hold them to account on storm overflows, but gratifying none the less to see the problems being acknowledged.

## **Council Housing update**

The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) round 1 & 2 provided grant to support the purchase of 13 properties. In addition I've included the updates below from our officers in full as both are of interest to Ringmer. The District Council is increasingly having to step in to 'rescue' Section 106 affordable housing due to lack of interest from housing associations. This can feel galling when it's a development we've opposed however it's better than losing the affordable housing element for local people altogether (if we don't step in it goes to yet more full-price private housing).

### **"Section 106 Sites**

*As per the March update to cabinet, the council has seen an increase from developers who are unable to secure a registered provider (RP) for the affordable housing element, linked to Section 106 agreements on larger planning applications. In some cases, these are applications that have not been supported by the Council and have been won at appeal. The issue being, if an RP does not come forward, the affordable housing provisioning will be lost and revert to general open market housing. As a result, the Council has made the difficult decision to step in and secure the affordable housing in these situations. This will be subject to the usual due diligence and viable business cases. Where these sites are being presented to the Council, we will continue to consult with Ward Councillors.*

### **Broyle Close, Ringmer**

*The existing Lewes District Council owned brownfield garage site received planning permission for 3 x 3-bedroom houses back in 2021. This scheme has been presented to Cabinet in March and a capital budget allocation approved for the delivery of the site through the modular housing framework with Boutique Modern, providing high performing specification, including solar PV systems to generate electricity and air source heat pumps, which will ultimately reduce running costs for tenants."*

\*Screenshot of southern water handout (excuse the grease mark!)

