

Maria Caulfield's Update for Ringmer Parish Council, Feb 2024

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

Draft Local Plans

Lewes District Council is encouraging as many residents as possible to have their say through this stage of consultation on future development in the district.

This consultation is about gathering your views, and evidence the sites and their suggested policies, which together will form the spatial strategy and policies. The draft Local Plan, when published in spring 2024 will then set out the policies and framework for new homes, employment space and community facilities. **The consultation is running from 29 November 2023 to 19 February 2024.**

More information can be found here ; [Towards a Lewes Local Plan: Spatial Strategy and Policy Directions - Lewes and Eastbourne Planning Policy Consultations \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/towards-a-lewes-local-plan-spatial-strategy-and-policy-directions)

Kings Portrait Scheme

The Cabinet Office has unveiled a new official portrait of His Majesty The King, captured by photographer Hugo Burnand at Windsor Castle last year. The portrait depicts His Majesty donning a Royal Navy uniform as Admiral of the Fleet, adorned with official medals and decorations. In a bid to commemorate the new reign, public authorities across the United Kingdom, including Local Authorities, schools, courts, police forces, and fire and rescue services, are invited to apply for a free copy of the portrait. The scheme will extend to town, parish, and community councils, as well as Ministry of Defence-sponsored cadet forces in February

I will be in touch with further updates on how to apply soon. However, please do let me know if this is something you would be interested in.

Boost to Housing Benefit

I'm delighted to share that the Government is introducing legislation to Parliament, aiming to increase the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). This initiative, benefiting 1.6 million low-income households, is projected to save families an average of £800 in the upcoming fiscal year. The government's decision to raise the LHA rate to the thirtieth percentile of local market rents in April 2024 addresses the challenges posed by high rents due to global inflationary pressures. This move will support over one million families in meeting current housing costs. Over the next five years, a significant investment of £7 billion will aid 1.6 million private renters on Universal Credit or Housing Benefit across the UK, providing an average benefit of £800 for the year 2024-25. This critical cost of living support is a direct result of the Government's strategic decisions to combat inflation and strengthen the economy. Responding to concerns from residents about previous LHA rates, I am pleased that the government is taking steps to increase LHA, benefiting 75,000 households in the South East.

'Excellent' Rating on Local Bathing Waters

I am delighted at the recent announcement from the Environment Agency, confirming the Excellent quality rating for the bathing waters in the Lewes Constituency, specifically Birling Gap and Seaford. The Environment Agency assesses over 400 bathing waters across the country annually, categorising them as Excellent, Good, Sufficient, or Poor based on water quality. This year's results, reflecting a 96% compliance with minimum standards, with almost 90% achieving the highest ratings of Excellent or Good, underscore the continuous efforts needed to enhance bathing water quality. Government initiatives, such as the 'Plan for Water,' which involves a substantial investment of approximately £1.6 billion addresses issues like sewage discharges, nutrient pollution reduction, and water supply augmentation. I acknowledge the progress made since the 1990s, highlighting that increased regulation and sustained investments have significantly improved coastal bathing waters across England.

Urging Parents to get Children Vaccinated for MMR

Recently, in my role in the Department for Health and Social Care I appealed to parents to ensure their children receive the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccinations as cases of measles rise. With the UK Health Security Agency declaring a national incident due to potential outbreaks spreading across the country, I emphasise the importance of vaccination to curb the spread of this preventable disease. The MMR vaccine is a crucial

component of the NHS Routine Childhood Immunisation Programme, with doses offered at one year and a second at three years four months. Parents with children who missed vaccinations and individuals of any age not yet vaccinated are encouraged to come forward for the safe and free MMR vaccine. I have highlighted the proven safety of the vaccine and its lifelong protective benefits, urging all parents to prioritise their children's health. Over 99% effectiveness is achieved with two doses of the MMR vaccine, providing robust protection against measles and rubella.

£150 Warm Home Discount payments extended for Park Home residents

I would like to thank E.On Energy and Ovo Energy for this extended scheme, these additional funds have come at just the right time for park home residents as winter temperatures continue to drop. Those who have already been awarded the £150 Warm Home Discount will automatically receive the Heat the Home bundle. Please see my recent announcement for more information ; www.mariacaulfield.co.uk/news/maria-caulfield-mp-welcomes-ps150-warm-home-discount-payments-extended-park-home-residents