

District Councillor Emily O'Brien

January 2026 Report to RPC

A short report due to festive season, I hope everybody had as enjoyable a break as I did (apart from the flu!).

With the sad news on Boutique Modern going into administration, we have been updated that arrangements are going well with putting in place alternative arrangements to finish the Broyle Close council house development in Ringmer.

In my cabinet role, before Xmas I convened a very useful meeting with Southeast water and senior planning officers from LDC around concerns raised around the water shortage situation (particularly heightened with the Ardingly reservoir issues this autumn) to ensure that both LDC and SE Water are speaking to each other over water pressures with relation to development given the frustrating gaps in the planning system, and that SE Water responds to major planning applications with reference to water supply (not just relying on local plan processes, given much major development across the whole of their area, not just our district, takes place outside of local plans).

We are of course busy promoting the local plan consultation, it is vital that as many people as possible locally respond and part of our role as district councillors is around promoting the consultation, as well as listening to the views of residents so we can relay them, and we are keen to work with the Parish Council on this. I'm pleased the parish council is considering a letter to residents and happy to deliver a round or two if you need extra deliverers.

Cabinet just had an informal briefing regarding the in-person consultation events officers are organising. The format for consultation has been developed with town and parish councils so apologies if you are aware already, but I'm told the events will include the head of planning policy giving a number of presentations so not just a static display. When I met with officers before Xmas and raised my concerns around the lack of tangible infrastructure information currently, I requested there is locally relevant information on infrastructure so that the Ringmer event can play a role in this crucial next phase, and so local people can engage on what is needed where, and I'm told this is in hand (possibly as part of presentations). There is also the opportunity for parish clerks to do an individual briefing with Nadeem before the event to help ensure it's suitable, and I would encourage RPC to take this up.

The government's consultation on the shape of future unitary authorities closes on 11th January, and planning for our council's unasked-for demise to ensure the very best outcome for residents, nature and our green spaces continues to take a lot of time and energy.

As ever please get in touch if I can help – emily.obrien@lewes.gov.uk

Kindest regards

Emily O'Brien (She/her)

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Vice Chair of the Local Government Association (LGA) Neighbourhoods Committee