

# James MP May newsletter

I hope this newsletter finds you well on what looks set to be a very sunny bank holiday weekend! Please see below some of what's been going on the last few weeks.

- 1. County Council Elections**
- 2. Local Government Reform**
- 3. Eton New Town**
- 4. Customs Union Amendment**

## **1. County Council Elections**

Earlier this month, East Sussex embraced the future of UK multi-party politics, electing a diverse mix of Liberal Democrat, Conservative, Green, Independent, and Reform councillors. However, at the first meeting of the new County Council, Conservative and Independent councillors chose to ally with Reform, handing them control of the council. Liberal Democrats voted alongside others to prevent this outcome, but the motion was lost by a single vote.

After years of Conservative failure, it is concerning to see them now propping up Reform. It sends a clear message to voters: vote Conservative, get Reform. While this was not the outcome we had hoped for, our priority remains the same. I have always been prepared to work constructively with whoever runs our local services, and residents across East Sussex rightly expect the council to focus on delivering for local people. We will be holding the new administration to account on the issues that matter most, fixing the failing system for children with special educational needs, addressing pressures in adult social care, and tackling the poor state of our roads.

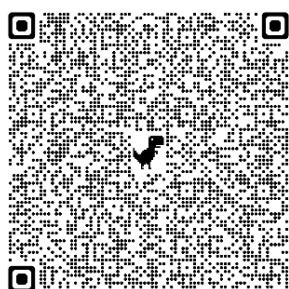
I sincerely hope the new Reform-led administration approaches these responsibilities with the care, competence, and urgency they deserve, rather than prioritising divisive or attention-grabbing culture war issues, as seen in other areas. What matters now is whether they can deliver for East Sussex residents, and we will be watching very closely.

## **2. Local Government Reform**

The consultation on local government reorganisation in Sussex is now live, and I strongly encourage residents to take part. These changes will shape how local services are delivered for decades to come, affecting everything from planning and housing to roads, social care, and the health of our local democracy. It is vital that as many people as possible have their say before final decisions are made.

While the latest proposals represent an improvement on earlier plans, I remain deeply concerned about Brighton & Hove City Council's continued attempts to expand into my constituency through Falmer Parish. This proposal makes little sense in terms of population size, community identity, or economic geography. Falmer is a small village within the South Downs National Park, and its future should be shaped by the surrounding communities, not driven by pressure for urban expansion. Whatever your view, it is essential that local voices are heard, and I would urge residents to engage with the consultation to help shape the outcome.

You can participate [here](#).



### **3. Eton New Town**

Reports that the developers behind the so-called “Eton New Town” proposal, which was rightly excluded from Lewes District Council’s Local Plan, have begun carrying out new studies in the area have understandably caused concern among local residents. The proposal to build 3,000 homes in the East Chiltington and Plumpton area would cause irreversible harm. There is simply not the infrastructure in place to support development on this scale, making it entirely inappropriate for the location.

I am also concerned that changes to the government’s National Planning Policy Framework could be used to bypass Local Plans, taking decision making away from local communities and centralising it in Whitehall. This is a special landscape, and development on such a scale would fundamentally alter its character, not just for current residents but for future generations. Once countryside like this is lost, it is lost for good. While we all recognise the need for more housing, it must be delivered in the right places, supported by proper infrastructure, and backed by genuine local consent.

I did an interview with the Daily Express that [you can read here](#).



### **4. Customs Union Amendment**

On 20 May, the Liberal Democrats gave Labour MPs another opportunity to back a closer relationship with Europe and start repairing the damage caused by Brexit through an amendment to the King's Speech. With families and businesses across our constituency facing rising costs, a customs union with our European neighbours would help cut red tape, support trade, and ease pressure on household finances.

Time and again, the Government has been offered chances to reset our relationship with the EU, including through proposals such as a Youth Mobility Scheme and a customs union, but has chosen to maintain the status quo. This vote was another opportunity for Labour to support a more practical and cooperative approach with our European neighbours. Unfortunately, Labour voted against our amendment.