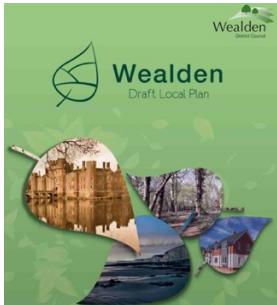


Update and News

January/February 2026

LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION



Despite having consulted on the Local Plan last year, government changes to Wealden's housing target and the way the impact of new homes on roads/transport should be assessed, we now have to undertake a further round of consultation. Much of the previous plan does not need changing but we have had to revise various chapters and look closely at allocated sites. We have also taken the opportunity to protect habitats and green spaces, plan for greater numbers of smaller properties, improve space standards, and requiring new development to contribute to net zero targets. Subject to a vote by full council on 29th January, the consultation will open for six weeks. Exhibitions will take place across the district including in Uckfield on Saturday 14th February and in Maresfield on Tuesday 24th February. Please use your local knowledge to comment on this new version.

NO COUNCIL TAX INCREASE FROM WEALDEN?



I'm sure you will have seen that many councils will be raising their council tax for 2026/27. Considering our sound financial health as a local authority, the Green-Liberal Democrat-Labour Alliance is proposing not to increase its proportion of your council tax. This proposal will be put to full council in February when we consider our budget for next year. So, in the run up to our abolition as an authority we are not only able to invest in our communities we can support many of our residents facing cost of living pressures.

As you will be aware Wealden only takes a small share (10%) of your council tax charges, the rest being determined by East Sussex County Council, Police and Fire and Rescue. We expect them to increase their charges so I am afraid your bills are likely to increase, just not as much, as we will freeze our element of your bills.



WATER OUTAGES

You don't need to remind you about scenes like this! Christmas and New Year was a misery for many of our neighbouring communities. The failure to secure this most essential of our public services is a direct result of years of underinvestment, following on from the privatisation of the water industry. Companies pay out more in dividends and interest than they do on infrastructure, pipes and treatment plants. In my view the government's recent plans to change regulation won't make much difference. Over 80% of people think that water should be in public hands. I agree!

FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS

Biffa will start collecting food waste from our homes on 30th March. The distribution of food waste bins should have started by the time you read this – if not, they'll be arriving soon. This change is the result of national legislation, and the Council supports it, as it will reduce the amount of waste going to landfill or being incinerated. Both those methods of waste disposal cause pollution, whereas the collected food waste will be turned into soil conditioner that will be usable by farmers, gardeners and anyone else concerned with improving the quality of soil without using harmful substances.



Further information can be found at:
<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/how-does-your-service-work/food-waste/food-waste-faqs/>

UCKFIELD LEISURE CENTRE



The Council has secured a grant of almost £225,000 from Sports England to help pay for the installation of solar panels and other energy efficiency improvements at the Leisure Centre. This is a further demonstration of our commitment to the long-term future of the Centre which, you may recall, we saved from closure soon after being elected in May 2023.

ELECTIONS CANCELLED

Elections for the new mayor of Sussex, due to take place in May this year, have been cancelled by the government. They are now due to take place in 2028. However, the County Councils and Brighton & Hove Council are lobbying to have the election in 2027. At the same time East Sussex County Council have successfully applied to the government to again cancel county council elections. Government argues that, as councils are being reorganised, elections would be costly, time consuming and divert resources from services. I can't help feeling that if we take this approach, we would never have any elections again!



Councillor Ward Budgets

Following from the success of this year's awards, there may be another round of funding later in the year. I will confirm this when a decision has been made, but you might like to start to think about any projects for which you would like additional funds.

Please don't hesitate to **contact me** to discuss these or any other issues important to you.

Contact me on cllr.graham.shaw@wealden.gov.uk