

Hopes for affordable housing plans

WEALDEN District Council has welcomed Whitehall decisions which will enable it to address the problems of the local housing market.

Cllr Graham Wells told Cabinet that recent government announcements gave greater certainty to the Council's own plans to provide more affordable homes. In September the Council announced plans to build 214 new affordable homes over the next four years. But these were being put in jeopardy by rules on borrowing and council house sales.

"Things have changed since we drew up last year's housing budget," said Councillor Wells. "We now have much greater certainty in order to pursue our plans."

In its recent Housing Green Paper, the Government announced that it would not be expecting local authorities to sell off their high value council houses to fund the provision of



Recently completed: Old Hop Gardens.

right to buy for Housing Associations.

The Government has also announced the removal of a debt cap on local authority housing budgets which limited how much they could borrow to build affordable homes. Councils can now set their own prudent limit for borrowing. For Wealden, this will be £95 million, an increase of £23.3 million on the earlier limit.

These announcements have enabled Wealden to increase spending on its New Build council housing investment programme over the next five years, including the use of £4.9 million from HRA balances. As well as building new council homes, Wealden's Housing Revenue Account budget also seeks to:

Use opportunities to buy off-the-peg affordable homes from developers where appropriate.

Maintain the high quality of its current stock of 3,000 council homes.

Ensure all tenants receive this coming year's 1% rent reduction in line with Government policy.

Cabinet's proposals for Wealden's Housing Revenue Account budget will now go out for consultation with stakeholders including WRAG, the Wealden Residents Action Group.

Drive to Digital gets noticed

WEALDEN'S successful Drive to Digital programme has been shortlisted for the 2019 Local Government Chronicle Awards.

Wealden has been shortlisted in the "Driving efficiency through technology"

category. It is the only District Council to appear in the shortlist.

Cllr Nick Collinson, Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership, said: "We have developed initiatives over the last three years to make our services easier for the public to use, whenever they want to use them. We can de-

vote more time to those who need most help."

The Drive to Digital programme covers a range of initiatives to help more people get online. Wealden now offers 85 services online 24/7 through the MyWealden portal.

Sign up for an account at <https://my.wealden.gov.uk/>



Nominate your Community Volunteer Heroes by 11 January

25 years of age.

The successful nominees will be presented with their awards at the Chairman's annual

Civic Reception on Friday 1 March 2019 at Herstmonceux Castle.

"We want to highlight the tremendous contributions volunteers are making to Wealden's communities," said Cllr Chris Hardy, Chairman of Wealden District Council.

The three categories for the Community Volunteer Awards 2019 are:

- Community Volunteer Hero (someone who makes an outstanding contribution to running a voluntary group or groups or its beneficiaries).
- Young Volunteer of the Year (under 25 years old).
- Volunteer Group of the Year.

In the first two categories, the winning individual will receive a £100 donation to an organisation of their choice and £25 in gift vouchers.

The winner of the group/organisation of the year award will receive a £125 donation to the organisation.

Nominations from fellow volunteers, employees or service users of voluntary organisations in Wealden are encouraged. All details including nomination forms and eligibility conditions can be found on the [Chairman's page of the Wealden website](#). Telephone 01892 602435 for further information.

THE DEADLINE for nominations for the Chairman's Community Volunteer Awards has now been extended to Friday 11 January 2019.

Wealden District Council is looking for nominations for the Chairman's Community Volunteer Awards, particularly for the Young Volunteer of the Year for those under



Get home safely

WEALDEN'S No Plate, No Badge, No Ride campaign has been in operation over Christmas.

Using posters in pubs, taxi ranks, and social media, it reminds the public about the dangers of using unlicensed minicabs and taxis. All drivers with a Wealden licence badge undergo a strict application process, and have to pass regular medical and criminal record checks.

Last month, a Wadhurst driver was prosecuted by the Council for operating an unlicensed minicab service and fined £1,650 by Hastings Magistrates.

Welcoming Averil to Wealden

THIS month we have welcomed our new Corporate Director of Community and Customer service, Averil Price.

Averil joins us with an impressive 27 years of local government experience, and has previously served as a director both at Chelmsford City Council and Maldon District Council.

She is also vice chairman of the national charity Living Streets, which encourages everyday walking, and holds an Institute of Directors' diploma. She joins Chief

Executive Trevor Scott and Isabel

Garden, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Planning, Policy and Environmental Services who make up Wealden's Corporate Management Team.

Other management changes include the full time appointment of Chris Bending as our Head of Planning and Environmental Services.

Kelvin Williams will continue to assist the Council on a range



Averil Price

commercial projects, including Vicarage Field, on a part-time basis in the new year.



Chris Bending

Consultation on the new Corporate Plan

WEALDEN District Council is asking residents and local businesses for their views of the Council's priorities for the next four years.

The priorities are outlined in the Council's draft Corporate Plan 2019-23.

"We are producing the Corporate Plan now to provide strategic continuity as we transition over to a new Council following the District Council elections on 2 May 2019," said Councillor Bob Standley, Leader of Wealden District Council.

"This builds on this Council's achievements of the past four years by identifying specific aims and ways in which these can be

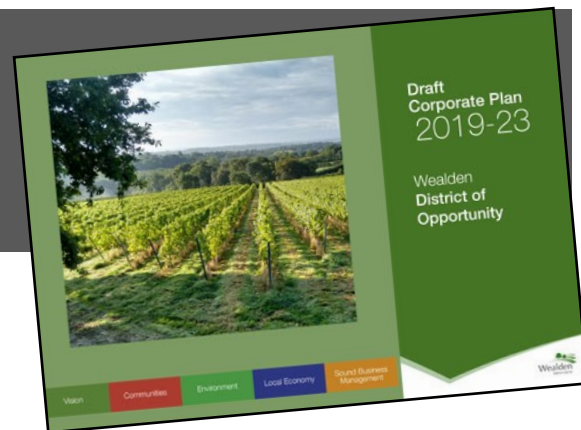
achieved.

"We are focussing on Communities, the Environment, the Local Economy and Sound Business Management.

"Given the decline in central government funding, the Council has to become more commercially active so it has the resources to continue to provide services and achieve its aspirations."

There are 40 corporate actions outlined in the draft Corporate Plan.

You can [view the draft 2019-23 Corporate Plan](#) on the Consultation pages of the



Wealden website and [take part in the consultation](#). The consultation closes on 23 January.

Local organisations are also being asked to give their views. Responses to the public consultation will be considered at the 30 January 2019 Cabinet meeting.

The final recommendations for the adoption of the new Corporate Plan will be made at Full Council on 20 February 2019.

Included in the many actions identified in the 2019-23 Corporate Plan are:

The Environment:

- Helping deliver infrastructure to support growth including schools, medical facilities, care, roads, transport, and affordable homes.
- Helping to facilitate cleaner, smarter, more affordable energy for our communities, and extend the electric vehicle charging network.
- Supporting transport improvements, including an improved A27, the Lewes-Uckfield rail link and the continuing development of the A22 corridor.
- Reduce pollution, littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping; reduce waste, use of plastics and promote recycling.

The Local Economy:

- Supporting the expansion of local businesses.
- Leading on key local regeneration projects.
- Encouraging start-ups and niche businesses.
- Working to encourage inward investment in the District from a range of sources.
- Work with partners on a quality tourism offer, increasing visitor spend but containing numbers in line with capacity.
- Actively support Wealden's farming, forestry and viticulture enterprises.
- Promote local apprenticeship opportunities to stimulate employment for young people.

Communities:

- Meeting local needs in our housing market particularly for first time buyers and older people seeking to downsize.
- Build and maintain more council homes to a high standard.
- Helping people who are, or are likely to become, homeless.
- Supporting initiatives to address changing health needs across the District.
- Seeking opportunities to invest in more modern GP surgeries and local health hubs in Wealden.
- Encourage and promote better leisure, sporting and recreational facilities across the District.

Sound Business Management:

- Keeping council tax as low as possible.
- Pursuing income generation opportunities.
- Optimising access to services online 24/7, reducing the costs of delivery and maintaining direct support for people who need it most.
- Ensuring the efficient and effective service delivery of all Council services.
- Include community value in our approach to return on investment.
- Provide open, transparent and timely performance data to demonstrate our accountability to our stakeholders.

March 1 will see the launch of the new Revised Electoral Register using the new ward boundaries

THE REVISED Electoral Register was published on Saturday 1 December 2018.

The December register has been produced using the current District Ward and Parish Ward boundaries as the new Wards will not exist until the elections in May 2019.

The Electoral Services Team will distribute the December register and the January and February monthly revisions to the register on the Ward and Parish Ward boundaries in place at the time.

Another revised Electoral

Register will be published on
Friday 1 March 2019.

New register in March

This March register will be produced using the new District Ward and Parish Ward boundaries in readiness for the District and Parish Council elections on 2 May 2019.

All the electoral numbers for electors will change from the December to the March register.

This means that any nomination papers for the May elections must be completed

using the March register.

Copies of the March register will be available to candidates upon written request from the last date for publishing the notice of election – Tuesday 26 March 2019.

This is the earliest date that individuals can officially become candidates at the election

However, Wealden's Electoral Services Team will be happy to help with providing electoral numbers to assist in the completion of nomination papers during March.

Consultations close on 9 January

Draft Older Persons Housing and Support Strategy

THE strategy sets out to ensure that the housing and related services provided by the Housing Revenue Account to current and future housing applicants, council tenants and retirement living leaseholders meet their needs. This is done through six priorities and a detailed plan of how these will be met.

To read and comment on the draft until 9 January 2019 go to:

www.wealden.gov.uk/housingconsultations

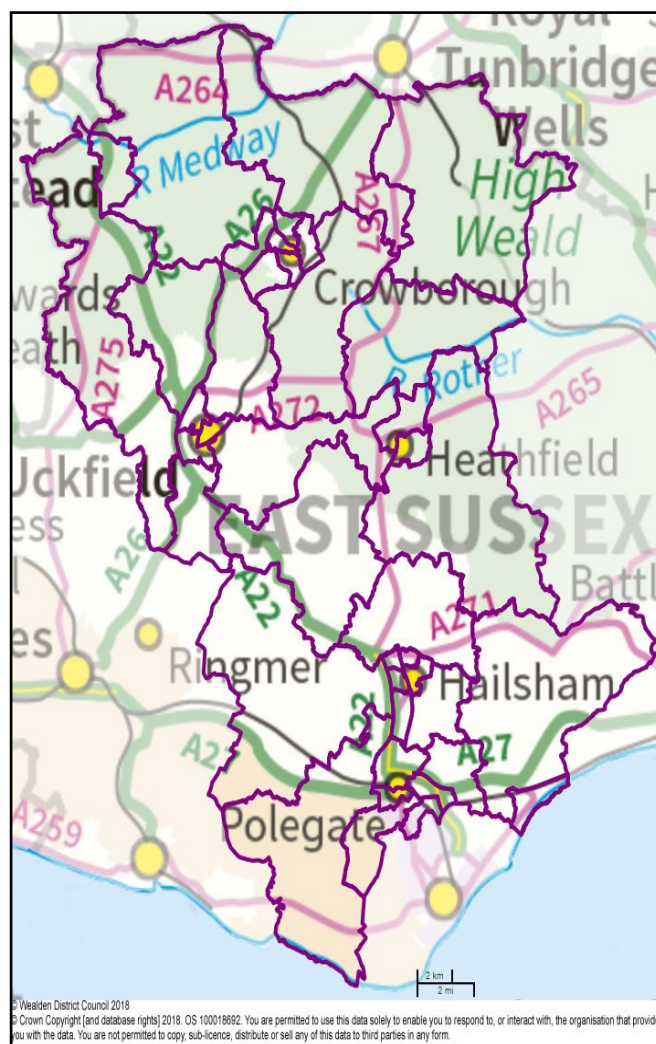
Draft Vulnerable Persons Support Strategy

THE strategy sets out to ensure that vulnerable tenants and leaseholders are identified, supported and referred or sign-posted to other agencies as necessary. This is done through three objectives and a detailed plan of how these will be met.

To read and comment on the draft until 9 January 2019 go to:

www.wealden.gov.uk/housingconsultations

For more information contact Nicola Levett at housingpolicy@wealden.gov.uk



There will be 41 Wealden District Council wards for the 2019 elections on 2 May.

The Great Wealden Spring Clean is coming...

WEALDEN is again supporting the Great British Spring Clean campaign which aims to inspire as many people as possible to join forces to clear the litter that blights our landscape and threatens our wildlife.

Over the past three years this, now annual, event has seen an unprecedented take-up in the Wealden District and there is now a dedicated army of Wealden litter picking heroes publically taking a stand against littering.

Next year we will be calling on towns, parishes, community groups, organisations and individuals to join this army and help remove as much litter-particularly

single-use plastic litter - from our environment as possible. This public display of action sends a clear message that littering, in all forms, is unacceptable.

Wealden District Council will be supporting the campaign by providing litter picking equipment, waste sacks and waste collection services to individuals and groups that have registered their event on the Great British Spring Clean website.

The campaign will run for a month **from 22 March to 23 April 2019** so there is plenty of time to mobilise your communities and arrange your litter pick. So save the date for the 2019 Great



Frant's 2018 litter haul

Wealden Spring Clean and join us in taking a stand against litter in Wealden.

More details will be issued via press releases and the Parish Bulletin in the New Year. You can register your interest by emailing: springclean@wealden.gov.uk



Litter picking equipment will be issued on a first-come-first-served basis.

2.7% council tax proposal

WEALDEN District Council is proposing a 2.7% increase in the council tax residents pay for its local services.

This will enable it to become a self-sufficient local authority unsupported by central Government grants.

"There is a great deal of uncertainty going forward as to what, if any, funding we will receive in the future from central government," said Councillor Bob Standley, Council Leader.

"At the time of making this decision, we still have not received details of the Local Government Finance Settlement which had been expected earlier this month.

"We are expecting a full contribution over the coming year from our Vicarage Field shopping centre investment and the new crematorium.

"The measures we take now will enable us to continue to deliver the high standard of services local residents and businesses expect."

The proposed increase will mean an additional £5 a year contribution by the average Band D council tax payer, with proportionate increases for the other council tax bands.

The Council has built up a reputation for sound financial management through shared services and partnerships as well

as its own investments.

In a survey last year, 76% of residents said they were satisfied with the way the Council runs things compared to a national average of 67%.

Town and parish councils are invited [to take part in the Budget consultation](#) which closes on 23 January.

Further information can be found in the [Consultation Diary](#) of the Council's website. The Consultation closes on 23 January 2019.

The final decision about Wealden's council tax rate for 2019/20 will be made at the meeting of Full Council on 20 February.



A NUMBER of exciting local food businesses are competing in the 2019 Sussex Food and Drink Awards.

Finalists include Five Ashes cheese producer Alsop & Walker, Crowborough-based gin producer Tom Cat Gin, Alfriston's The Rathfinney Tasting Room and Wingrove House and the Perry Hill Farm Shop.

[Online voting](#) in the Sussex Food Awards closes on 17 January, 2019. Last year's awards attracted a record 15,000 votes.



Charging for green waste collections

WEALDEN District Council has confirmed that it will introduce customer charges for garden waste collections when the new Joint Waste Contract for refuse and recycling collections starts from 29 June 2019.

"We have, reluctantly, decided to ask the residents who value the service to make a contribution to the cost, as residents in the other Joint Waste Partnership authorities of Rother and Hastings already do," said Councillor Roy Galley, Cabinet member for Waste Management.

"We will introduce a charge of £50 a year from 1 July 2019. This level of charge will place us well down the list of the authorities across the whole of Sussex that charge for garden waste services with all except Rother charging more."

"I firmly believe that this still represents good value for money for our residents."

More information about how the scheme will operate will be available in the new year along with information about home composting for those who choose to do so.

Cutting down on single-use plastics

A THREE part action plan has been approved by Wealden District Council to take a stand against single-use plastics.

"Like many others, I was shocked to see the destruction plastic pollution is causing to marine wildlife on TV programmes like the BBC's Blue Planet," said Councillor Roy Galley, Wealden Cabinet member for Waste Management.

"We have a good record when it comes to recycling plastics. But not all plastics can be recycled and some that can, never see a recycling bin.



"We want to help make refilling your own water bottle easy, convenient and cheap by encouraging as many Refill Stations in the District as possible.

"We will be working with the national Refill campaign to encourage cafes, bars, restaurants, and other businesses in Wealden to sign up to the free Refill app and put a sticker in their window to let people know that they are welcome to fill up their bottle for free.

"We are looking to reduce the use of single-use plastics in our own workplace, particularly plastic cups, straws and cutlery and encourage our leisure partner, Freedom Leisure, to do the same. Leading by example, we hope local businesses will follow.

The three part action plan, which focusses on the Council's own internal performance, businesses and communities, was approved at Wealden's December Cabinet meeting.



For further information about any of the articles in this Parish Bulletin, please contact Policy, Insight & Communications on 01892 602745 or pr@wealden.gov.uk

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