

Highclere APA 10 May 2022

ELECTION

It was disappointing in that the Basingstoke Conservatives fared worse than the national average in losing 4 seats and thus reducing the Conservative majority in BDBC to 4. Cllr Sam Carr was re-elected in Evingar

HIGHCLERE Specific

I became a full-time member of the Development Control Committee which is useful as I work with the Planning Officers and the Committee members and are therefore better positioned to look after the interests of Highclere.

A year ago we had the rejection of the applications for 26 dwellings behind the Red House and the five at Falkland Farm Wash Water. Both of these were appealed by the applicants but as yet there is no date for a hearing – the Inspector spends a day reviewing the documentation and any subsequent letters of support or objection. Large appeals usually have a Judicial Enquiry.

There is no news on Wash Water as there are still many consultee reports outstanding but we have it set up that as the Officers get to a recommendation they and the Head of Planning will meet with the Evingar councillors to review the case.

The area is subject to many contentious applications namely 350 at Bishops Green, another 50 at Bishops Green and 250 at Kingsclere. The Appeal decision for the 1000 at Sandleford, Newbury is due this month and that could have a severe impact on our Highways.

ENFORCEMENT

There have been a number of Enforcement cases during the last year and during the last three years we have had 4 in Highclere just on fences. There is no proactive Enforcement instead it relies on members of the public bringing it to the attention of the Planning Department. It is useful to inform your local councillor or parish council if you raise an Enforcement Case directly.

BASINGSTOKE LOCAL PLAN

Much work has been put into this with a target date of 2024. There is particular disquiet about potential housing targets as the Government seems to come up with formula which no one believes is sensible. The lack of a 5 year

land supply is an ongoing irritant as developers like to think it gives them carte blanche but it does not as the NPPF and policies still apply.

Many thanks to Colin Wall and the team who are working on the Highclere Neighbourhood Plan and East Woodhay is at an advanced stage with the government evaluator.

Both Highclere and East Woodhay are expected to have very low targets for development in the new LP and currently it is expected Highclere will have 10 and East Woodhay nil.

BOROUGH News

The Finances remain in decent shape and the fears resulting from the pandemic have been quelled as the Government funded many of the schemes and resulting work expense. We still have in excess of £500m in assets of which £320 is commercial property but we have a paper liability in excess of £100m for the pension fund. We receive no government grant from Government.

Cllr Izett is the Portfolio Holder for Property and Finance and Cllr Falconer is the Chairman of the Audit and Accounts Committee.

The Home Office requisitioned hotels in Basingstoke for the long term accommodation of Afghan refugees. We have a programme for supporting the Ukrainian situation but Hants CC is the lead authority.

There is a general shortage of planning expertise across the whole of the UK and there has been a big increase in the number of applications. We have recruited both new staff and agency staff but targets for handling applications are challenging.

The Green Strategy and Climate change emergency has led to most council owned buildings having programmes of work to upgrade them. Of more immediate impact the shift to home working has enabled BDBC to compress and rent out surplus capacity. The downside is that it is no longer possible to call in on planning and talk with officers at their location and it strange getting planning applications at 11 pm or 7 am.

We await with bated breath the announcement from Government that it is reviewing HWRCs such that they will have to accept all domestic waste including plasterboard so we hope they will consider the farce of access which affects many councils throughout the country.