

District Cllr Obbard's Report for Withyham Parish Council 8th Nov. 2021

The Annual Parish Conference has been rescheduled to next Spring.

It will probably take place in April or May 2022.

This is a key opportunity for Parish Councils across the District to come together and discuss various topics which affect them all, and the chance to question the Council Leader and members of the Senior Management Team.

The change of date has partly been due to the disruption from Covid, but also to give the District Council the opportunity to disseminate information about the new Local Plan.

By Spring of 2022 the next stage of public consultation should be underway and a much clearer idea of the likely content of the Plan will be apparent.

Grants to be replaced with Crowdfunding and Lottery.

At the recent Cabinet meeting the decision was taken to replace the direct grants that the Council makes to local voluntary and community organisations with a combination of Crowdfunding and community lottery.

This has been successfully used by several other local authorities and should provide more funds to these local organisations and at a lower cost to the Council.

The Crowdfunding will possibly start in the next financial year and the lottery over the next 2 or 3 years.

The Housing and Revenue Account Business Plan has been published for the period 2021 – 2025 (it should be on the Council's website but I can find it!)

This sets out the Council's Social Housing plans for the next 5 years, analysing the requirements and how we can meet that demand.

It is planned to build about 150 new homes at an approximate total cost of £40m in the period to 2025

The cabinet also considered a report on the decarbonisation of the housing stock

This would aim to bring all the Social Housing up to an average EPC rating of "C" this is likely to cost between £50m -£60m. (All new builds will aim for a "A" rating)

The recent Budget announcement of government grants for replacing gas boilers with heat pumps has given an indication of what is expected to be direction of travel. The amount of grant available is tiny in comparison to the anticipated costs however, and there is no indication that there will be serious money on offer.

Wealden District Council

You will no doubt be aware of the passing the other month of Chris Hardy, the District Councillor for Hartfield Ward.

There was a memorial service for him in Withyham Church last week.

If you have any specific questions or requests, I am contactable by phone or email and I will do my best to deal with them for you.

Cllr Keith Obbard,
Wealden District Member for Withyham Ward.

CLIMATE CHANGE – WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Learn about climate change and why we need to act here;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUh-TXKldiE>

(It takes 3 mins and costs nothing)

Find out which parts of your lifestyle creates the most greenhouse gas emissions, and make a plan to reduce them. Carbon Footprint calculator here; <https://www.carbonindependent.org/index.html>

(it takes about 20 mins and costs nothing)

QUICK WINS

Switch your electricity supplier to a genuinely 100% renewable tariff.

For example Good Energy or Ecotricity but there are several others.

You can find out which electricity suppliers are the greenest by checking on the website ; <https://electricityinfo.org/>

(It takes an hour, costs nothing to switch and could save you money)

Eat better quality food, locally produced and organic if possible.

Eat less meat, particularly intensively raised animals such as pigs and chicken or imported beef.

Search the internet for Local and Organic producers and retailers.

<https://www.organicfoodee.com/shopping/eastsussex/>

<https://www.bigbarn.co.uk/local-food-map/>

(Make this part of your normal routine. It will take longer to shop locally, and may cost more but will be healthier)

Buy less “Stuff”

Eg; buy clothes and other goods of better quality, keep them longer and get them repaired rather than disposing of them and buying again.

Use “Repair Cafes” if you don’t have the skills to repair things yourself.

Buy vintage or second-hand clothes and goods. Use Charity Shops.

Subscribe to Ethical Consumer magazine to get in-depth reports for the ethical ‘Best Buys’ on all consumer goods and services.

<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>

(New goods will be more expensive, Second-hand may take more time and effort, but will save you money in the longer term)

Travel by plane less or not at all.

Try to take long journeys by train rather than flying or by car if you can.

Car share whenever this is an option & travel by bus if this is convenient.

For very short journeys walk or cycle if you can.
(Trains are expensive, car-share and walking is cheap!)

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

Lobby your District and County Councillors to make all new homes zero carbon, stop building on flood plains, and protect our countryside.
Write and email your MP to change the law to take government subsidies away from fossil fuel industries and give to residents to help them become Carbon Neutral.
(Costs only your time and lobbying really does work!)

Improve the insulation in your home.
Simple things first such as repairing drafty doors and windows, adding extra insulation in the loft space.
Make sure that external walls are insulated, change windows for double or triple glazed ones.
Try to get your home insulated to an EPC standard of A.
(Some measures are fairly cheap, others are more expensive. A medium term investment which will save you money for the next 15 - 20 years)

Install Solar Panels on your roof to generate electricity and
Add Battery Storage if practicable.
(Large investment will take several months to organize, but will pay for itself in about 5 – 8 years and give you virtually free electricity for the next 10 – 15 years)

Change your car to a 'plug-in' electric one if most of your journeys are less than 100 miles. New models such as Hyundai Kona can do up to 300 miles on one charge, but are expensive.
Second-hand cars such as Nissan Leaf can be bought for 1/3 rd the price but will do less than 100 miles per charge.
(Large investment which will save you money in running costs. My Leaf costs about 3p per mile to run)

Change your home heating from oil or gas to an electrically powered heat pump system. There are government grants available to help you do this. Local Energy Co-Ops are a good source of information. For example Forest Row Energy Co-op. <https://www.forestrowenergy.com/about>
(It is essential that your home is well insulated before considering this option, but will be a large investment that saves you money in the long run)

Don't despair! Be part of the solution – not part of the problem!