

A Happy New Year from Everyone at Wealden District Council

## **Wealden Cabinet News 14 December 2011**

CABINET HAS APPROVED an updated Corporate Plan taking into account changes in the public sector including the continuing need to reduce the public deficit, the Localism Act and the publication of the Government's Open Public Services White Paper. The key Council priorities remain *Enhancing our Surroundings*, *Maintaining the Quality of Life* and *Ensuring Value for Money*. Through the *Vision Towards 2015* process, the Council will be looking at the way services are provided and how best to continue to develop its work with partners and the voluntary sector. Councillors will be exploring these issues in a series of workshops early in the new year.

For more information contact Charles Lant, Chief Executive.  
Tel: 01323 443300 or email: [charles.lant@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:charles.lant@wealden.gov.uk)

THERE WERE 306 new homes completed in Wealden in the first half of the 2011/12 council year, exceeding the target by 106. Completions are expected reach 562 by the year end, of which 195 will be affordable homes. According to provisional data Wealden is now recycling 47 per cent of household waste collected, exceeding last year's 42 per cent rate. The number of completed food inspections so far this year is above target at 317, with the council on course to complete 586 by the year end. Only 23 per cent of Planning Appeals have been upheld against the Council compared to last year's 25 per cent. The Cabinet reviews its current performance against an agreed set of indicators every quarter.

For more information contact David Palmer, head of Policy & Review.  
Tel: 01323 443229 or email: [david.palmer@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:david.palmer@wealden.gov.uk)

CABINET HAS PROPOSED to freeze the Wealden element of council tax for the second successive year, making use of the Government's support for those councils who limit expenditure increases to 2.5 per cent. The Wealden element of residents' total council tax bill will remain at £174.06 for an average Band D property for the third year in a row. "We are doing our part in helping reduce the national deficit and launched our Transformation Programme nearly three years ago. It has delivered substantial savings and, when fully implemented, will deliver savings of over £3 million a year while maintaining key services," said Council Leader Bob Standley. The 2012/13 budget does not allow for a general pay increase for Wealden staff or an increase in Councillors' allowances. There will be provision in the budget for the Council's lowest paid staff to receive a small increase in line with Government policy.

For further information please contact Steve Linnett, Chief Finance Officer.  
Tel: 01323 443234 or email: [steve.linnett@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:steve.linnett@wealden.gov.uk)

IN KEEPING WITH the national policy to increase local authority rents until they are in line with Housing Association rents, the Council will be consulting on proposals to increase rents for Wealden Council tenants by an average of 8.5 per cent. The increase is limited for individual tenants to inflation + 0.5% + £2 per week. Following last year's consultation with tenants, Cabinet agreed to reduce the size of the 2011/12 average rental increase from 6.8% to 5.8% on the understanding that the following year's increase would take account of the concession. Unfortunately inflation, a key element in the rental increase formula, has remained high throughout the year and in September was recorded at 5.6%. Some 64% of Wealden's tenants receive some housing benefit and for those who receive maximum housing benefit, the rent increase will be met in full.

For further information please contact: Amanda Hodge, Head of Housing.  
Tel:01323 443364 or email: [amanda.hodge@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.hodge@wealden.gov.uk)

## Planning News

A six week consultation running from 16 January to 28 February will seek public views on a range of Strategic Development Sites being put forward within the proposed Wealden Core Strategy. The sites are within 12 Strategic Development Areas designated in the Core Strategy. They are at Land to the West of Uckfield, Land to the East of Hailsham, Land to the North of Hailsham, Land South of Polegate and East of Willingdon, Land at Dittons Road, Polegate, Land East and South East of Stone Cross, Land North of Stone Cross, Land at Pine Grove, Crowborough, Land at Jarvis Brook, Crowborough, Land to the South East of Crowborough, Land to the North West of Heathfield and Land adjacent to Tunbridge Wells in the parish of Frant. As part of the consultation, four weekend exhibitions are scheduled, with officers on hand to help the public. These will be held on Saturday 4 February at Crowborough and Hailsham and Saturday 11 February at Uckfield and Polegate. Further details of times and venues will be available in the new year.

"Although the Public Examination of our proposed Core Strategy will not begin until 17 January, it is important we start the process of narrowing down the possible sites for new development as soon as possible," said Councillor Roy Galley, Cabinet Member for Planning and Development. "It is still early days and I would stress that these are only options we are looking at, and not firm proposals." The Examination of the Core Strategy will run from 17 January until 2 February, and take place either at the East Sussex National Golf Resort or Uckfield Civic Centre. Further information about the Core Strategy hearings is available from the Programme Officer, Lynette Benton: Telephone 07985 878623 or email [lynette.benton@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:lynette.benton@wealden.gov.uk) .

For further information please contact David Phillips, Head of Planning and Environmental Policy.  
Tel: 01892 602587 or email: [david.phillips@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:david.phillips@wealden.gov.uk)

## Wealden Community Toilet Scheme



Wealden's Community Toilet Scheme is now looking to expand into Wadhurst and Mayfield. The scheme is already established in Crowborough, Hailsham, Uckfield, Forest Row and Horam where it provides a more accessible and cleaner alternative to running expensive public toilets.

Participating businesses receive regular payments from the Council ranging from £500 - £1500 to allow their toilets to be used by members of the public. The Council is particularly keen to hear from businesses who can provide facilities for people with disabilities and babies. As part of measures to save taxpayers' money, the Council has closed the Uckfield public toilets in Luxford Fields car park. The public toilets in Hailsham's Vicarage Field car park are being transferred over to Hailsham Town Council which intends to demolish and rebuild the facility.

For further information please contact Martin Ashdown, Cleansing Team Manager.  
Tel: 01323 443619 or email [martin.ashdown@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:martin.ashdown@wealden.gov.uk)

## Housing Allocations Policy



The consultation on the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy ends on 6 January 2012. There are some significant changes affecting prospective new tenants' local connection to Wealden, contributions to the community and an expansion of the area covered under the Parish Lettings Policy to include Heathfield and Waldron and Forest Row. Also included are proposals to change the short-listing procedure for rural properties and the number of refusals applicants can make before their priority is reduced. Full details of the consultation can be found at [http://www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Housing/Strategies\\_and\\_Key\\_Documents/Housing\\_Consultation\\_Documents.aspx](http://www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Housing/Strategies_and_Key_Documents/Housing_Consultation_Documents.aspx)

For further information please contact: Gemma Forshaw, Housing Options and Performance Manager.  
Tel: 01323 443267 or email: [gemma.forshaw@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.forshaw@wealden.gov.uk)

## Community Service Honoured



The chairman of the Council, Cllr Jonica Fox presented Wealden Civic Awards to three stalwarts of the local community at November's Full Council meeting. Dennis Blurton of Mayfield has been a supporter of Mayfield Scouts for 32 years, and been closely involved with the village newsletter, parish church and school. Sophie Fuscio, post mistress of Ninfield, has been an essential part of the local community, providing help for residents way beyond her normal duties. Ann Thompson, of Maresfield, has raised over £20,000 for community projects through the sale of home-grown plants.

"It is great to have the opportunity to thank them for the selfless service they have performed over the years, and I am grateful to my fellow councillors for bringing this to my attention," said Cllr Fox.

For further information, please contact Natasha Berski, Democratic Services Assistant,  
Tel 01892 602435 or email: [natasha.berski@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:natasha.berski@wealden.gov.uk)

## Digital Switchover



The digital switchover in the Wealden area will start on 30 May 2012 when the traditional television signal will be switched off. For older and disabled viewers who may find making the switchover difficult, the BBC is running Switchover Help Scheme.

Most people will be asked to pay £40 towards the standard option of help. This includes:

- Easy to use equipment to convert one set.
- An approved installer to supply and install the necessary equipment.
- A 12 month aftercare service including a free helpline.

The service is free to people over 75 who also receive pension credit income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or income-related employment and support allowance, as well as others who meet the eligible criteria. The Help Scheme will soon be writing directly to people who are eligible to ask if you want help. Further information on the Switchover Help Scheme can be found at [helpscheme.co.uk](http://helpscheme.co.uk) or call 0800 40 85 900. Textphone users can call 0800 40 85 936.

*For further information please contact Debbie Peters, Equalities Officer.  
Tel: 01323 443204 or email [debbie.peter@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:debbie.peter@wealden.gov.uk)*

## Consultation on Economic Development Strategy



East Sussex County Council is seeking the views of business organisations and other groups involved in the local economy about its draft East Sussex Economic Development Strategy (EDS). The economic priorities outlined in the draft Strategy are similar to those of the new South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

These include:

- Infrastructure (transport, broadband and commercial site development).
- Sector growth, development and diversification.
- Improving skills and a more inclusive workforce.
- The visitor economy (rural and coastal).

The consultation will continue until 9 March 2012. The draft development strategy, and a online response form can be found on the East Sussex County Council web site at the following link <http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/consultation/2011/economicstrategy/download.htm> Please can you copy Wealden's Economic Development and Tourism Section into any comment on the EDS you make. They can be emailed to [Sandra.Bultitude@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Sandra.Bultitude@wealden.gov.uk).

*For further information please contact Sarah King, Economic Development Manager.  
Tel: 01892 602884 or email [sarah.king@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.king@wealden.gov.uk)*