

A Message from your County Councillor - October 2018

Following on from last month's Newsletter I started the month with four days at the Party Conference in Birmingham. Not the Conference some expected, no blood-letting and a general feeling of unity.

On returning there was a well-attended meeting at Teynham on air quality – a lot of support for a Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road to get traffic, especially lorries, off the A2 through the village.

The highlight of the first weekend back was attending Murston Old Church to view the display of poppies etc.

Locally the Agenda is increasingly dominated by Planning and housing numbers. Although our Local Plan was only adopted in 2017 the Inspector ordered a review by 2022 due to concerns over the highways network. The "Objectively Assessed Need" for housing is expected to show a 36% higher figure, up to 1,050 houses per year. In order to give the Council maximum choices to meet the increased figure we invited expressions of interest in the concept of a 'Rural Town or Village' from land owners and developers.

This concept, which is increasingly being adopted by local planning authorities, is to deliver future housing provision in one or two locations. The advantage being that a larger development would be expected to fund its own infrastructure needs, roads, schools, health facilities, etc.

Of the four proposals received by Swale Borough Council, three lie within the Swale East County Division which I currently represent. The most fully developed proposal is that between Bapchild and the M2 in the vicinity of Kent Science Park. Another proposal from the Duchy of Cornwall lies East of Faversham, South of the A2. This proposal lies almost solely in the Parish of Boughton. The most recent proposal to come forward is that to the South of the M2 either side of the A251, largely in Sheldwich Parish. Sheldwich Parish Council have called a meeting on the 21st November to receive Gladman's proposals and to hear the views of residents. At the time of writing I am intending to attend. The fourth proposal lies mainly to the West of the A249 in the vicinity of Bobbing and Iwade Parishes.

Early in 2019 we hope to be in possession of enough information to decide whether or not to continue a rural settlement option or a return to a traditional Policy of spreading any extra development throughout the Borough.

During October in addition to the usual exhaustive list of Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council Committees etc I also attended meetings of both Doddington and Dunkirk Parish Council's.

As this will be the last Newsletter, or certainly the last one to come out in print, in 2018 can I wish all residents a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Andrew Bowles

Email: abjs@btinternet.com

Mobile: 07778629879