

Summer 2025

Wealden District Councillor, Graham Shaw UPDATE

Launch of new infrastructure fund

Wealden's new Community-led Infrastructure Fund was recently agreed by councillors. The £2m fund aims to support small and medium sized organisations to pay for improvements such as adapting buildings, energy efficiency measures, improved access to outdoor spaces, or new facilities and equipment. The fund will support up to 80% of any costs, with organisations expected to pay for the remaining amount. If you are involved in a local organisation and want further information, please email CLIF@wealden.gov.uk and also let me know!

Securing the future of Uckfield Leisure Centre

You may remember that before the last council elections in 2023, Uckfield Leisure Centre was threatened with closure. We committed to keeping it open, so I am pleased to report that we have finally been able to sign the lease to keep the centre open until 2042. If, and when, Wealden Council is abolished in the next few years, this lease will be taken on by the new unitary council.

Councils call for an ambitious Green and Decent Homes Programme to help tackle the housing crisis and improve health

A cross-party coalition of more than 100 local authorities – including Wealden District Council - is calling on the government to support a transformative new Green and Decent Homes Programme. The programme would upgrade and modernise England's council housing making homes safer, healthier and more sustainable for millions of people across the country.

Poor housing costs the NHS around £1.4 billion a year. But investing in warm, energy-efficient homes could save up to £4 billion annually in health and social care. Councils, however, don't currently have the long-term funding needed to make these improvements or meet new housing standards. The Green and Decent Homes Programme sets out a plan to deliver the warm, safe homes the country needs.

We know that private tenants often have similar problems. We are developing a new climate change policy which may help, but our powers to control private landlords are limited.

Consultation on future planning decisions

Wealden District Council is asking residents to take part in a consultation that will influence how you can participate in how planning decisions are made in the future. Our new Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines how residents can be engaged in planning policy, including the Local Plan, ensuring your voices are heard in shaping the future of the area. We would like your comments on this new draft document. The consultation runs for eight weeks from the 4 July 2025 to 29 August 2025, providing an opportunity to share your views and help shape a more transparent, accessible, and inclusive planning process.

You can view the draft document and submit your feedback via the Planning Policy consultation portal <https://consult.wealden.gov.uk>

Decision on development of Land north of A272

Many of you will remember the planning application to build 49 houses on the land off the A272. The original application was unanimously refused by the Planning Committee, mainly regarding its impact on several heritage assets surrounding the site. However, despite the arguments of planning officers and residents, this has now been overturned on appeal by the Planning Inspector. The decision seems to highlight the fact that the Inspector has the power to substitute their decision for ours without finding that we made a single error, but purely by assessing the weight of the same

factors we've weighed, differently. An article in The Times online has covered the decision, see <https://www.thetimes.com/article/77ab75dd-1b82-498b-b117-1e368f7e8ed8?shareToken=59ef7a9ee590f77d25ee3a5e696176b8>

Buxted Primary School tackles the environment



One of the highlights of my work as councillor is being invited into our primary school to talk with pupils. Once again, I joined with Year 6 pupils as part of their environment module to discuss such questions as how clean is the River Uck? how much waste do we recycle? what happens to the waste we don't recycle? And how can we reduce the amount of traffic outside the school? As well as this module, every year the school establishes a 'Green Team' to carry out environmental projects around the school such as encouraging wildlife and reducing litter.

Buxted Scouts official opening of their new building



I also had the pleasure of attending the official opening of Buxted Scouts impressive new building (opposite the medical centre), attended by over a hundred parents, young people and Scout leaders. An incredible effort by many different people across the community, along with the winning of significant funds, has enabled this construction of a centre which provides a large hall, kitchen and equipment storage. Solar panels and storage batteries will enable the building to be energy self-sufficient

Council leadership changes

In line with the Alliance for Wealden cross party agreement the Green Party's Rachel Milward became Deputy Leader, whilst the Liberal Democrats James Partridge, stepped back into the Council Leader role. They will change over again in May 2026.

Wealden Citizens Advice



Having now the privilege being a trustee of Wealden Citizens Advice, I am seeing 'up-close' the tremendous work they are doing to support people across our district, including in Buxted. A group of dedicated staff and volunteers provides a wide range of confidential advice and help on all sorts of issues - money, benefits, housing employment problems, facing a crisis or just considering your options. If you want to access advice, please telephone on 0808 278 7811 or 0800 144 88 48 between 9am - 3pm Monday to Friday.

**Please don't hesitate to contact me to discuss these or any other issues important to you.
Contact me on cllr.graham.shaw@wealden.gov.uk Tel. 07770 571828**